



**HEGEL'S
DISCOVERY
OF THE
PHILOSOPHY
OF SPIRIT**

**AUTONOMY,
ALIENATION,
AND
ETHICAL LIFE:
THE JENA
LECTURES
1802-1806**

PINI IFERGAN



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Autonomy, Alienation, and the Ethical
Life: The Jena Lectures 1802–1806

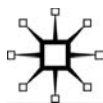
Pini Ifergan

Bar Ilan University, Israel

Translated by

Nessa Olshansky-Ashtar

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This book is dedicated to the memory of
Professor Werner Becker

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List of Abbreviations

Hegel

DFS	The Difference between Fichte's and Schelling's System of Philosophy
FK	Faith and Knowledge
FPS	First Philosophy of Spirit
HL	Hegel: The Letters
NL	Essay on Natural Law
SEL	System of Ethical Life
SPS	Hegel and the Human Spirit [Second Philosophy of Spirit]

Hölderlin

ELT	Essays and Letters on Theory
StA	Sämtliche Werke

Schiller

AE	On the Aesthetic Education of Man in a Series of Letters
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Introduction

In 1801, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel moved from Frankfurt, where he had devoted himself to independent study, while closely following the political, legislative, and economic developments of the day, to Jena, where he remained, teaching and writing philosophy, until 1807. These dates are not significant in themselves, but are often mentioned in the literature because they demarcate the period that yielded Hegel's first mature and fully articulated philosophical system, the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, published in April 1807. The unparalleled status of this work as a philosophical masterpiece relegated to the sidelines everything Hegel had written or published before that, and the Jena period became completely identified with the magisterial achievement represented by the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Even today the *Phenomenology* is considered Hegel's most important work, and despite the fact that Hegel's philosophy as a whole is often dismissed, the *Phenomenology's* renown as a philosophical classic remains unchallenged.

When a number of Hegel's unpublished manuscripts from the Jena period began to be published in the early twentieth century, however, this set in motion a reassessment of Hegel's work during the Jena years, a reassessment that took the new material into account. Publication of these writings, which are, in the main, working drafts and sketches that Hegel did not wholly finalize, has not only facilitated a deeper understanding of Hegel's thought prior to completion of the *Phenomenology*, and therefore of the goals he sought to achieve in writing it, but also opened the door to a reconsideration of his broader philosophical program.

On the timeline of Hegel's output, the Jena writings are situated between his earliest writings, most of which have a distinctly theological focus, and the philosophically formulated *Phenomenology*. They thus offer us

a window onto his evolving efforts to craft – or discover – the optimal narrative and conceptual tools for achieving the philosophical goals he had set for himself, goals that may themselves have been evolving. On the one hand, the manuscripts enable us to track the development of the fundamental concepts that go on to serve as the scaffolding for his later writings: Spirit, self-consciousness, the Absolute, sublation, the dialectic process, and so on. But on the other, the manuscripts, written early in Hegel's career, still display a considerable amount of spontaneity and directness, revealing to us a Hegel who is immersed in the culture of his day, a culture he is critical of, yet driven to help reshape. The Jena writings thus give us a glimpse of the important transition from Hegel the critic of the post-Enlightenment ethos to Hegel the philosophical system-builder. My reading of Hegel is grounded in this crucial shift, using it as a basis from which to trace the resonance of his cultural critique, not only in the philosophical problems he elects to address, but also in the structure and content of his arguments, and specifically, in the core concept of "Spirit" (*Geist*).

The concept of "Spirit" was worked out gradually, and therefore in its early forms, in the writings that predate the *Phenomenology* – especially the *System of Ethical Life* and the *Essay on Natural Law* – the presence of Hegel the critic of culture is quite pronounced. This presence is less apparent in the subsequent Jena writings, namely, the two lecture series on the "Philosophy of Spirit" (1803/1804 and 1805/1806), where the framework of "consciousness" has been adopted, and the concept of Spirit fully articulated.

Obviously, my decision to trace the manner in which Hegel continues, in less explicit forms, to be motivated by his social critique, even when engaged in what seems to be intense metaphysical system-building, picked out just one of many intriguing themes arising from the trove of Jena writings that beckon the researcher. I thus had a responsibility to choose wisely, just as, having chosen, I am now obligated to demonstrate the plausibility, both textual and philosophical, of my thesis as to the sustained element of social critique in Hegel's Jena writings. I do not wish to imply that my approach necessarily undermines other approaches to these writings, such as readings that see in them the gestation of Hegel's *systematic* philosophy, and concomitant *waning* of Hegel's reformist zeal, ruling out any chance that he might disseminate his ideas outside the academic community. There is no need to juxtapose the philosophical projects envisaged by these readings and insist that they are mutually exclusive. My project of tracing and reconstructing the socio-cultural critique that motivates Hegel does not entail that the

systemic dimension of his philosophy is mere rhetoric intended to give metaphysical heft to its underlying political objectives. It does claim, however, that this reconstruction and exposure of Hegel's critique of the liberal, subjectivist, and rights-based ethos of his day offers insight into his views on the nature and goals of philosophical analysis.

By Hegel's lights, the enterprise of philosophical analysis takes modes of conceptualization to be inescapably intertwined with human conduct, so that our justifications for our social norms and practices always reflect these practices. When a philosopher puts forward a justification for or explanation of a social practice, what she is really doing is uncovering and exposing the details of the practice itself, details that illuminate its necessity, and thus serve to justify the practice. Readers may notice that in the course of examining Hegel's writings, I sometimes draw attention to the fact that Hegel's arguments feature a unique blend of narration and logical justification, a mode of argumentation he develops in order to capture the fact that philosophical justifications are inherently embedded in social practices.

My reading of the Jena writings does indeed shift the philosophical center of gravity of Hegel's thought from the metaphysical plane to the socio-political. But it does not do so by relating to these writings, from *The Difference between Fichte's and Schelling's System of Philosophy*, written in 1801, to *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, published in 1807, as a brief window when Hegel had an opportunity to develop his thought in a socio-political direction, but – possibly not grasping its potential – chose to let it go and to channel his efforts in a different direction, namely, metaphysics. According to this reconstruction of Hegel's intellectual development – which I reject – it was only when cumulative critique of Hegelian metaphysics finally spawned a new approach to his work that the ideas he had let languish were revived. Hegel's ideas about alienation, autonomy, and ethical life were harnessed for use as the nucleus of a viable Hegelian social theory that extracted the non-metaphysical content of Hegel's thought, deeming it viable, and discarded the rest.

I will argue that this new construal of Hegel's thought as primarily concerned with societal questions, which was born of a critical attitude to Hegelian speculative metaphysics – or at least born of regret that Hegel abandoned his engagement with socially and politically oriented philosophy – is actually the approach to philosophy that should be unqualifiedly ascribed to Hegel himself! Reading the Jena writings as I do – namely, as suggesting an alternative vision of society and political life, a vision elements of which are clearly preserved in Hegel's more

mature work – enables, or better, *requires* us, to ascribe this position to Hegel.

From my remarks thus far, the rationale for my decision to focus on the Jena writings, which were not published by Hegel himself, should be manifest. These works bring to light the philosophical vision that motivates Hegel. My reading assumes that when Hegel arrived in Jena, he had already formulated his assessment, his diagnosis, of the socio-political malaise of his times, a malaise he was intent on finding a cure for. This premise is not self-evident, and requires justification, but the justification we adduce must be independent of the unique philosophical methodology developed in the Jena writings. In other words, the basis for identifying in the Jena writings what I consider to be Hegel's diagnosis of the cultural malaise of his day must be found, not in the writings themselves, but in the philosophical discourse of the times, to which the young Hegel was responding: the writings of Fichte, Hölderlin, Schiller, and so on (see Chapter 1). These writings can give us an initial idea of the problems Hegel was reading about and discussing with friends and colleagues, the problems that engaged and concerned him.

In light of the philosophical discourse prevalent at the time, it is clear that the cardinal problem which engaged Hegel was that of alienation. Alienation can be characterized as a rupture between the meaning of life, from the perspective of a given individual, and the various factors – nature, family, work, and so on – that dictate and circumscribe the conditions within which the individual must function, conditions that may prevent the individual from creating meaning for herself. Dissonance between the individual's outlook and feelings, and the conditions in question, gives rise to alienation and breakdown. This sense of rupture and estrangement, the young Hegel felt, was the basic message conveyed by the “image of man” (*Bild von Menschheit*) that pervaded the culture of the times, especially philosophy, particularly the “critical philosophy” of Immanuel Kant. Hegel, influenced by various thinkers who felt likewise, takes the origin of this image of the individual as alienated, torn, and disconnected from the full context of her life, to lie in Kant's metaphysical dualism. In the context of my claim that the Jena writings are a conscious philosophical attempt to offer a prescription for remedying the modern individual's alienation, it is important to understand the connection between Kantianism and the inability to feel at home in one's culture or society. This nexus will be clarified as the book proceeds.

The notion of “ethical life” is the general name employed by Hegel to denote the broad contours of his prospective solution to the ills of

the subjectivist ethos of modernity. “Ethical life” denotes the possibility of a harmonious state of balance, where the individual finds meaning and fulfillment in the social order she is part of and identifies with. Hegel stresses that absorption into this social entity does not entail loss of one’s autonomy. Absorption should be thought of as a state of reciprocal connection and dependence between the individual and the social order. Paradoxically, “ethical life,” one dimension of which is the individual’s dependence on this social structure, is an essential component of the individual’s self-constitution. This idea of “ethical” life as a solution to the problem of alienation, of making room for autonomy without opening the door to conflict, power struggles, exploitation, and isolation, will only be sustainable if the notion of a harmonious, unified society within which the individual is fully integrated can be shown to be part of a broader philosophical picture of the relationship between thought, or consciousness, and the external world. Hegel indeed develops this sort of big picture.

Hegel induces us, his readers, to think of modernity as a philosophical problem. In the final analysis, however, he does not succeed in demonstrating that this is so in a manner that is independent of his own mode of argumentation. Examining Hegel’s argumentation thus – again, paradoxically – provides insight into the way philosophical thinking is shaped by its historical era and by direct confrontation, or engagement, with that era. It is not separable from it. Hegel does not offer any explicit justification for his own approach to philosophy, but the justification is implicit in his writings, and needs to be teased out carefully. This tends to raise the suspicion that his efforts to preface the rubric “diagnosis of the maladies of the era” with the adjective “philosophical” is no more than an attempt to lend theoretical legitimacy to his own personal opinion – to put it bluntly, his own distaste for Kantian subjectivity and the rights-based ethos of modern individualism. When we consider the fate of Hegel’s philosophy after his death, the suspicion that it is impossible to offer a diagnosis of one’s own historical era or culture that is solely and strictly philosophical only increases. Here I am speaking, not of the way Hegel’s philosophy fell into oblivion, or was dismissed, but of how it was re-appropriated beginning in the late twentieth century. The history of this re-appropriation makes it abundantly clear that all philosophy is context-dependent. It is inextricably connected to what is happening in the intellectual mindset of the generation – we have all become postmodernists.

Even though Hegel himself did not assert that all philosophy is context-dependent, and was certain that his own philosophical doctrine

successfully invoked context-dependence to rise above context-dependence, his own theories and modes of argumentation were, in fact, just as context-dependent as any other philosophy. But it took some historical distancing and perspective for this insight to emerge, and it only came into focus when we could survey the changes, some subtle, some sharper, over the past 200 years, in the philosophical community's receptiveness to Hegel's philosophy.

As to that history itself, an impartial observer would likely conclude that everything Hegel had built up fell apart upon his demise. That is, philosophy as an attempt to put forward expositions of human existence that are at once historical-political, sociological, theological, and psychological, and perhaps even something that transcends all these definitions, seems to have, in the course of the nineteenth century, splintered into compartmentalized genres, each of which claimed independence from the philosophical yoke Hegel had imposed to keep them together. Yet what seems to be the rejection of Hegel's multi-disciplinary mode of argumentation does not invalidate the substance of the diagnosis he offered, and indeed, this book provides an exposition of that substance, along with Hegel's prescription for remedying it. The intellectual history of the disintegration of Hegel's grand synthesis does, however, indicate that the aspect of Hegel's thought that has remained vital and has withstood challenges is insistence on the need to respond to the malaise of modernity.

Let me mention another "symptom" of that pathology. The alienated individual, in addition to experiencing estrangement, disconnection, isolation, and so on, suffers from a sense of loss, a definite sense that something he had before is missing, even if he no longer has a clear idea of precisely what that something is. It seems to me those who read this book carefully, and try to follow Hegel's complex, sometimes mystifying, and occasionally maddeningly-convoluted argument, may discover that not only has Hegel's assessment of modernity not lost its relevance, it has, in the globalized and virtualized environment of the twenty-first century, increased in urgency. Hegel and his generation could still find, in the recent and distant past, anchors, such as the literature of ancient Greece and the teachings of Christian theology, that enabled them to keep their footing and make their way out of the modern predicament. For us today, however, these anchors seem to have corroded or been dislodged by the storms of the twentieth century. They, and other such shared cultural signposts, have become almost completely obscured by the pull of cultural atomism, the proliferation of ever-greater particularization, subjectivity, and subject-centricism, bolstered by technologies

such as headphones, playlists, individualized virtual communities, and so on. This loss of cohesion leaves us to find new ways of overcoming alienation and shoring up our autonomy. The relevance of Hegel's analysis of the alienation–autonomy dilemma to our present situation is illuminated by a passage in the *Philosophy of History*, perhaps his clearest and most straightforward description of the political consequences of modern philosophy's subjectivist approach.

“Liberalism” sets up in opposition to all this the atomistic principle, that which insists upon the sway of individual wills; maintaining that all government should emanate from their express power, and have their express sanction. Asserting this formal side of Freedom – this abstraction – the party in question allows no political organization to be firmly established. The particular arrangements of the government are forthwith opposed by the advocates of Liberty as the mandates of a particular will, and branded as displays of arbitrary power. The will of the Many expels the Ministry from power, and those who had formed the Opposition fill the vacant places; but the latter having now become the Government, meet with hostility from the Many, and share the same fate. Thus agitation and unrest are perpetuated. This collision, this nodus, this problem is that with which history is now occupied, and whose solution it has to work out in the future.¹

Having sketched some key elements of my reading of Hegel's social thought, as it emerged in the Jena writings, elements that will be explored in detail in the coming chapters, I now want to situate my reading relative to other readings that have been put forward in recent decades.

Scholarly research into Hegel's philosophy has, like study of the other great philosophers, been unceasing. But the engagement with Hegel's thought, unlike that of the other philosophical greats, has been extremely uneven, shifting from widespread intensive investigation to near-total disinterest. Karl Marx offered an apt characterization of the almost complete indifference to Hegel in the mid-nineteenth century, saying that Hegel was regarded as a “dead dog.” A period of intense interest in Hegel from the 1940s to the early 1960s was followed by a decade of quiet. Beginning around the 1970s, there has been a new wave of engagement with Hegel's philosophy, the clearest expression of which is the profusion of articles and books published in the past

several decades, which shows no sign of abating. Attending to the difference between these two waves will attest to the fecundity of Hegelian thought, and its capacity to spur intellectual creativity in diverse and seemingly incompatible directions.

The first wave was centered in Europe, mainly Germany and France. It featured neo-Marxist and existentialist developments of Hegelian thought, the former led by Georg Lukacs and the Frankfurt School, the latter by Alexandre Kojève and his students. The ongoing wave, on the other hand, is occurring chiefly within the English-speaking world. It focuses on the internal debate within liberalism, namely, the debate between communitarians such as Charles Taylor, Michael Walzer, Alasdair MacIntyre, and Joseph Raz, and liberals with a Kantian orientation, such as John Rawls, Ronald Dworkin, and many others. The present wave is particularly fascinating, inasmuch as most of the thinkers I have named do not see themselves as working within the framework of Hegel's thought at all, let alone as engaged in a dialogue with Hegelian philosophy. On the contrary, they seek to distance themselves from Hegel as much as possible. Generally, Hegelian leanings are ascribed to them by others – those engaged in the study of Hegel, who see the connection and endeavor to expose the affinities between Hegel and the aforementioned contemporary philosophers.

Two central issues much discussed in contemporary research on Hegel have bearing on the questions addressed in this book, but my focus diverges from both issues in ways I would like to delineate.

The first of these much-studied issues is the history of the genesis of Hegel's philosophy. Scholars engaged in studying this question seek to determine, on the basis of historical and philosophical contextual indicators, the "moment of conception," as it were, of Hegel's system, or components thereof. Those who take this approach attempt, by scrutinizing Hegel's connections with salient influences, especially Hölderlin and Schelling, to extract from Hegel's intellectual biography the nucleus from which the full-fledged system, or specific aspects of it, would ultimately develop. We might not want to go back as far as Dilthey's pioneering *Die Jugendgeschichte Hegels*, dating back to 1905, and Lukács's important *The Young Hegel: Studies in the Relations between Dialectics and Economics*, originally published in 1948, but we could hardly fail to mention the two principal works that created a virtually new branch of Hegel studies, namely, research into the development of Hegel's thought in the context of the broader question of the emergence of German Idealism. The works in question are Henrich's seminal 1970 *Hegel im Kontext* (which was followed by a series of

detailed studies by Henrich that delineated the constellation out of which German Idealism emerged) and H.S. Harris's comprehensive *Hegel's Development: Night Thoughts (Jena 1801–1806)*, published in 1983. In the 1980s – due to Henrich's enormous influence, primarily in Germany – numerous studies of the young Hegel, and his “path to a philosophical system,” deepened our understanding of the political, historical, and philosophical motivations that shaped his thought, and shaped German Idealism in general. Of these, Jamme (1983), Düsing (1983), and also works by Hamacher and Baum were particularly important.

My book, as will be evident in the first chapter, which discusses the historical context of the Jena writings, is premised on this research, and adduces it in support of my account of the fundamental problem that motivated Hegel's philosophy, namely, overcoming modernity's inherent fragmentation and alienation. To a great extent, Hegel identified this as the pivotal problem as the result of the intense philosophical dialogue he and Hölderlin had engaged in while in Frankfurt (1797–1800). But provision of a comprehensive account of Hegel's early period, from his studies in the Tübingen theological seminary to the Jena writings, or of the relationship between Hegel and Hölderlin, or Hegel and Schelling, is by no means my aim. Rather, I adduce the ideas, encounters, and intellectual context of Hegel's formative years as the key interpretive tool in developing a reconstruction of the “back story,” so to speak, of Hegel's argumentation in the Jena writings.

The second much-studied area in contemporary Hegel research that is of relevance to the questions I tackle is that of Hegel's intentions in formulating his socio-political theory. To what extent is it to be considered a concrete proposal for the description and justification of an alternative mode of modern existence? Some scholars present Hegel's position as representing an alternative way of life that exemplifies the overcoming of the social pathologies and tensions that Hegel identified as inherent in modernity. “Ethical life” (*Sittlichkeit*), a key Hegelian concept, plays a decisive role in this alternative picture, and there is an enormous body of interpretive literature that seeks to unpack the exact meaning of this notion. What function does it serve in Hegel's socio-political philosophy?

Roughly speaking, the literature on the concept of “ethical life” can be divided into two sub-areas. One addresses Hegel's critique of Kantian moral theory, and the concept of freedom it embodies. The literature takes Hegel's notion of “ethical life” to allow for an account of individual moral action that is not subject to the problems raised by the

Kantian moral agent. The second sub-area addresses the question of the relationship between the autonomous individual and the social collective she is part of. Does it rest on a fundamental conflict of interest, or is it possible to reconcile the interests of the two sides in a unifying framework that enables the individual to retain his autonomy while at the same time accepting responsibility for the social institutions he participates in, institutions that serve as the source for his self-definition as free and autonomous? There is, of course, no clear and unambiguous demarcation between these two issues, and often discussion of the first is taken to be a pre-condition for engaging in discussion of the second. Yet the issues can be separated and studied independently. In other words, Hegel's critique of Kantian ethics can be distinguished from the project of assessing Hegel's socio-political thought as a corrective to the pathologies arising from atomistic individualism.

Taylor's 1979 *Hegel and Modern Society* is, perhaps, the most notable example of the latter focus. To this pioneering study we can add those of Riedel (1984), Siep (1992), Hardimon (1994), Pippin (1997), and Honneth (1992, 2010, 2011).

Works that focus on the Hegelian alternative in the context of critique of Kantian ethics include several works by Allen Wood, especially *Hegel's Ethical Thought* (1990), in the wake of which a number of other scholars adopted this orientation, among them Geiger and Sedgwick.

Both sub-areas of the second main research focus, are, as I said, of relevance to the questions this book tackles, and indeed direct relevance, in light of the foundational notion of "ethical life." Despite this relevance, however, the vantage point from which I engage in analysis of this pivotal notion is not that of the degree to which it reflects critique of Kantian ethics. My principal interest in the notion of "ethical life" is its role as an early attempt to construct a metaphysical solution to the malaise of modernity – the alienation and fragmentation that Kantian ethics gives rise to. As to the second sub-area of research into Hegel's aspirations for his socio-political theory, namely, the status of the project of reconciling the interests of the individual and those of the society of which she is a member, an enterprise that focuses on the notion of "ethical life" – my affinity with this research focus should be clear. Indeed, the thrust of my work does not differ, in principle, from that of the works I mentioned as falling under this rubric: Taylor, Riedel, Siep, and so on. What differentiates *Autonomy, Alienation, and the Ethical Life* from those works, however, is my decision to direct my attention solely to Hegel's development of the notion of "ethical life" in the course of the Jena writings from 1802 to 1806.

In choosing the time-frame 1802 to 1806, I have chosen to leave two of Hegel's best-known works, *The Phenomenology of Spirit* and *The Philosophy of Right*, the former written in 1807, the latter in 1821, outside the purview of this book. Apart from the obvious temporal discontinuity vis-à-vis the latter, there are three reasons for my decision. First, so much scholarly attention has been directed to these works, and to their respective treatments of "ethical life," that examining them yet again would leave little room for any contribution on my part. More importantly, the two series of Jena lectures, which I refer to as FPS (First Philosophy of Spirit) and SPS (Second Philosophy of Spirit), already incorporate, in incipient form, many of the fundamental concepts that will later feature in the two better-known works. Most significantly, however, the tentative, in-process nature of the Jena writings will prove more edifying than the polished, for-publication works, with respect to the manner in which Hegel experiments with conceptualizing and systematizing social-existential ideas.

Indirect involvement with Hegelian thought via the internal debate within liberalism, which I noted above, has led to publication of numerous studies of Hegel, studies that have now gone beyond the debate over liberalism. A shared theme is discernible in most of these studies: Hegel's thought provides the best and most balanced solution to the tension between two elements of modern consciousness: the individual's demand for autonomy, on the one hand, and the individual's dependence on her social-historical environment, on the other. For only by way of the latter can the former be satisfied. Because this basic Hegelian insight has resonated deeply – at least in the past few decades – with the basic tenets of liberalism, it has served as the framework for renewed discussion, not only of the Hegelian stance's capacity to serve as a basis for social critique, but also of the constructive solution it offers to the fundamental dilemma of modernity.

This constructive alternative has been articulated in a variety of diverse readings of Hegel by scholars such as Alan Wood, Robert Pippin, Terry Pinkard, and Robert Williams. The interpretive writings of these and other scholars manifest a pronounced tendency to "Kantianize" Hegel. Hegel's thought is presented as an improved version of Kant's. Hegel is presented as having succeeded in overcoming the serious flaws in Kantian philosophy, and having provided a sturdier conceptual and philosophical foundation for liberalism. Some of these flaws, it is claimed, were due to a simplistic adoption of the Kantian stance that paid insufficient attention to the weaknesses identified by Hegel's critique. The aforementioned scholars accept the premise that only by

linking Hegel to Kant, and taking him to continue the Kantian enterprise, is Hegel's thought rendered a suitable conceptual foundation for liberalism, and perhaps even for modernity in general, insofar as it is identified with liberalism.

It is no coincidence that I have listed only philosophers from English-speaking countries here. For the reading prevalent among German interpreters of Hegel – the reading that has had the greatest influence on my own interpretation – has been far less inclined to the said sort of Kantianization. Rather, it employs interpretive moves that seek to preserve the differences between the two philosophers to a far greater extent, principally vis-à-vis their respective understandings of the nature of human agency. Human agency, viewed as moral and political agency, does not exist in a vacuum, but is always embedded within social-historical contexts that imbue it with meaning. There is, I contend, a profound and irreconcilable difference between Kant and Hegel with regard to the manner in which they conceive modern consciousness.

My reading of Hegel is framed by the premise that the Hegelian enterprise is an attempt to reconcile the individual's demand for autonomy with her dependence on her social-historical environment. It should therefore be classed with the contemporary literature on Hegel that seeks to demonstrate the relevance of Hegel's thought for present-day political philosophy. Yet at the same time, I will vigorously contest the claim that acceptance of this general premise requires us to view Hegel as a new and improved Kant. Obviously, I do not deny the close conceptual links between the philosophies of Hegel and Kant – such a claim would be ludicrous. Nevertheless, on my reading, the discontinuities between them are so basic and profound that only by ignoring essential aspects of each is it possible to describe Hegel as completing Kant's philosophical project. Let me elaborate on this very briefly.

The fundamental tenet of the Kantian stance is dualism, which pervades every aspect of Kantian philosophy. From Hegel's perspective, this dualism itself is the problem, and the search for a way to overcome it defines the entire Hegelian enterprise. The Kantian interpretation of Hegel so popular today errs, I will argue, in assuming that the only way to satisfy the individual's demand for autonomy, without thereby causing her to be alienated from her social-historical reality, is to uphold Kant's premises.

This book will trace the manner in which the project of overcoming the alienation ensuing from the individual's desire to realize his autonomy leads Hegel to develop a conceptual system capable of breaking this

Kantian impasse. Hegel attempts to accomplish this without deferring to the ancient Greek model of political life. For the Greek model did not recognize the primacy of the subject, and thus – inasmuch as it is the subject who demands autonomy – did not have to contend with the demand for autonomy. The complicated, perhaps impossible, mission Hegel undertakes is to fully utilize the achievements of the Enlightenment, and specifically, the demand for individual autonomy – for freedom – without endangering the historical continuity with the traditions which gave rise to that demand. The overcoming of alienation is a fundamentally practical, as opposed to theoretical, desideratum. My exposition of Hegel takes this practical desideratum to necessitate the development of a conceptual scheme that can overcome alienation at the level of philosophical discourse, a conceptual scheme that can unify the particular and the universal. This conceptual scheme radically diverges from that of subject-based philosophy, or what is often referred to as the reflective philosophy of the subject, or subjectivity – that is, philosophy the starting point of which is the subject reflecting on herself – especially in its Kantian formulation. Hegel, in analyzing the roots of the problem of alienation, identifies the premises of the reflective philosophy of the subject as the primary source of alienation.

Before concluding, let me summarize the main claims that will be set forth in the coming chapters:

1. The problem of alienation, and the attempt to overcome it, dictate Hegel's reasoning not only in his socio-political writings, but also in his highly speculative works.
2. The young Hegel's explicit project of finding a solution to the alienation problem goes through a number of different formulations before Hegel settles on the concept of "Spirit," which enables him to articulate both the problem and its solution in a compelling manner, a process that takes place during the formative Jena period.
3. The concept of "ethical life" (*Sittlichkeit*), which encapsulates Hegel's solution to the alienation problem, is inextricably linked to the concept of the Absolute.

1

What Motivated Hegel's Philosophical Project?

1 Introduction

Every first-year philosophy student soon learns the schematic version of the history of modern philosophy, which she can use to characterize the figures deemed to have played a role in shaping modern philosophy. According to the schema, the rationalists and the empiricists constitute two distinct camps separated by an unbridgeable conceptual chasm. This chasm remained impassable until Kant, who succeeded in putting an end to the seemingly intractable conflict with his grand synthesis, which united the two opposed conceptual frameworks. The last significant protagonist in this long-running battle, prior to the emergence of the Kantian solution, was Hume. For a while, it seemed that Hume's skepticism had managed to settle the dispute between the rationalists and empiricists in favor of the latter. But the schema presents the Humean solution as a pyrrhic victory, inasmuch as the empiricist epistemology – the putative victor – necessarily undermines the validity of philosophical reasoning. Kant's synthesis, however, carries out the crucial mission of bridging the chasm between rationalism and empiricism. At the same time, it also accomplishes something perhaps even more important: it provides an appropriate answer to Hume's skepticism. This answer, in addition to its crucial contribution in making possible objective knowledge – a pre-condition for the sciences – also serves to re-assert the validity, in principle, of philosophical reasoning.

So powerful has the schematic version of the history of modern philosophy been that over the years, it has become an integral part of the philosophical tradition's self-understanding. It serves us as a conceptual and historical framework within which, or in relation to which, we identify schools of thought and philosophical positions. Its primary advantages

are its simplicity, and the fact that it tells a convincing story, that is, it presents a convincing account of intellectual history. The narrative is appealing chiefly because its general structure is that of antagonism and a heroic struggle which culminates in a resolution, like a story with a happy ending: the antagonism is overcome, and the struggle ends.

The absence of a similar such tale of struggle in the annals of post-Kantian philosophy in general, and of the formative period between Kant and Hegel in particular, is striking. This conspicuous lacuna does not merely put the history of post-Kantian thought at a pedagogic disadvantage, which in any event might not be viewed as a problem for philosophy per se. Its significance lies principally in its impact on the prospects for describing and understanding the questions facing philosophy in the wake of the Kantian achievement. The absence of a clear and accepted historical schema is, as I noted, particularly conspicuous with respect to German Idealism as it underwent a transition from Kant to Hegel via Fichte and Schelling.¹ Any attempt to describe this transition quickly leads to a dead end, or to what can be characterized as an impasse between the claim that there is a basic continuity between Kant's philosophy and Hegel's, and the claim that there is no such continuity.

On the continuity thesis, there was a continuous philosophical process that began with Kant and was completed by Hegel. This thesis, put forward in great detail early in the twentieth century in Richard Kroner's *From Kant to Hegel*, continues to find advocates among interpreters of Hegel even today. Prominent exponents include, in Germany, Klaus Düsing and Hans Friedrich Fulda, and in the English-speaking world, Robert Pippin, Allen Wood, and Terry Pinkard.² A possible motivation for the persistence of the continuity thesis may lie in the explanatory power of the schematic account of the history of modern philosophy up to Kant. On the schematic account, Kant resolved the fundamental dichotomy of modern philosophy, hence any continuation of the philosophical endeavor after Kant must constitute either a conceptual modification of the Kantian solution, or alternatively, correct its flaws and fill in its lacunae. There is simply no other possibility. This neo-Kantian outlook is responsible, to a great extent, for two very different readings of German Idealism's philosophical project. The first reading is apologetic. On this reading, the only way to justify the philosophical stance espoused by German Idealism is to construe its premises as fully identical to those of the Kantian project. The other interpretive reading is critical, seeking to undermine the philosophical project of German Idealism by claiming that the whole project rests on a complete misunderstanding

of the premises of the Kantian position. On this line of thinking, the fact that some proponents of German Idealism take themselves to be continuing Kant's work is but an idle boast, a delusion. This may also be one of the reasons for the persistent tendency to dismiss or belittle German Idealism on the grounds that it rests on a misunderstanding of Kantian philosophy.

Juxtaposed to the continuity thesis is the discontinuity thesis, the thesis that during the transition from Kant to Hegel, philosophy underwent a major rupture. Hegel's philosophical project is taken to represent the culmination of this rupture. On this account, Hegel constitutes the consummation of the process of severance, not only from Kant's philosophical project, but also from that of modern philosophy in general, beginning with Descartes. The most radical characterization of this transition presents it as a fundamental transformation of the philosophical enterprise, which ceases to be the reflection of consciousness on itself – the philosophy of subjectivity – and is re-framed as conceptual activity aimed at understanding the cultural and historical context that determines the human condition, and the possibility of changing it. Given the fundamental shift posited by the discontinuity thesis, the schematic picture of modern philosophy up to Kant is – from the perspective of the discontinuity theorists – inappropriate as a description of Hegel and post-Hegelian philosophy, since the problem that philosophy must now confront is very different from that addressed by Kant, inasmuch as its basic objective has undergone a crucial change.³

The unsuitability of the schematic version of the history of philosophy from Descartes to Kant as a description of the problematics of the transition from Kant to Hegel creates, as I said, a dichotomy between accounts that posit continuity and those that posit discontinuity. This raises a question the importance of which is not merely historical, but primarily philosophical: is it possible to resolve the controversy and determine, once and for all, whether the transition from Kant to Hegel is characterized by philosophical continuity or discontinuity?⁴ There seem to be at least two possible routes by which one might seek an answer to this question.

On the one hand, it would seem to be possible, *prima facie*, to carry out a conceptual analysis of the philosophical problems with which Kant grappled, and to decide whether these are, ultimately, the same problems that occupied Hegel. Answering this question in the affirmative will also provide an unequivocal answer to the continuity-discontinuity controversy. This is the route taken by most interpreters of Hegel up to the present.⁵

The second path to an answer is more complex. It involves surveying the motivations underlying post-Kantian philosophical thought, seeking to determine their interconnections and tease out their conceptual ties to the fundamental problems addressed by Kantian philosophy. The controversy between champions of continuity and champions of rupture is perceived as an integral aspect of the transition from Kant to Hegel, since this transition – like every radical transition from one era to another – entails tension between continuity and discontinuity. The difficulty for those seeking to describe such a transition is always to explain how a new era emerges from the *zeitgeist* of the previous era without having to forgo its claim to originality. Yet originality insists on the possibility that the new ideas are continuous with those of the preceding era. For only by accepting the premises of the continuity–discontinuity controversy is it possible to speak of, or characterize as significant, a change in a historical or philosophical position. That is, the analysis of affinities between philosophical theories is based on the assumption that historical time, or to put it more accurately, time in general, is continuous and not discrete.

In my view, the second route provides a better account of the course taken by philosophical inquiry in the transition from Kant to Hegel, a process that resulted in a radical change in the core philosophical questions, and hence this is the route I will take.⁶ In other words, I will not seek to examine Hegel's relationship to Kant in terms of conceptual issues devoid of any specific historical context, but rather, I will examine it in terms of the problems that actually motivated and gave rise to the work of the German Idealists.⁷ I will seek to show how these motivations determined the manner in which these thinkers understood Kant's philosophical project. This understanding in turn determined the framework for their own philosophical project. Analysis of these motivations will enable us to further clarify the continuity–discontinuity controversy, as it will equip us with a clearer understanding of the sense in which the Kantian project is a necessary condition for later developments. Precisely because it is a necessary condition, only a radical departure from it, and not attempts to complete it or rectify its shortcomings, allowed for creation of the philosophical alternative put forward by German Idealism, especially its Hegelian version. The radical change to which analysis of the Idealists' motivations points is, in essence, substantive and not formal: it addresses the fundamental questions of what philosophy tries to describe, and what it seeks to accomplish. Yet change of this type also necessitates the creation of a philosophical method that provides the tools with which to describe new philosophical challenges.

The radical change to which analysis of the Idealists' motivations leads can also be characterized as follows: philosophy is no longer perceived as a-historical, but as emerging from the historical context in which it is created. In effect, by reflecting this historical era, it captures the quintessence of the era and its malaise, or in other words, it provides a diagnosis, as it were, of the era. Yet paradoxically, at the same time it serves as a means of overcoming the maladies it uncovers.

This assumption that philosophy is not a-historical but emerges from the historical era in which it is created entails a new relationship to Kant's philosophy, which is not construed as purely theoretical, but rather as the quintessential expression of the Kantian era. At the same time, Kantianism is criticized for its inability to offer a satisfactory solution to the era's central problems, which it articulates so faithfully. The assumption thus clarifies how analysis of the Idealists' philosophical motivations – their desire to understand their historical era as well as their desire to overcome its major problems – enables us to grasp the post-Kantian thinkers' ambivalent relationship to Kant.

The crucial change in the meaning of philosophical reflection was not, of course, effected by a specific act. There was no cohesive ideological movement that put forth a manifesto explicitly articulating its relationship to Kant and spelling out an alternative to the Kantian approach. Rather, it arose from the gradual coalescence of a unique intellectual and historico-political constellation. This process, the final outcome of which is epitomized by Hegel's assertion that there is a relationship between historical reality and philosophical reflection, can nonetheless be characterized in many different ways depending on which figures are taken as its heroes. We might endorse a description in which thinkers such as Solomon Maimon, Karl Reinhold, Friedrich Jacobi, and Fichte are the protagonists. If we choose this course, our discussion will undoubtedly focus on theoretical questions arising from a close reading of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, will tend to be circumscribed rather than open-ended, and will not seek to extend the discussion to the broader debate between the Enlightenment thinkers and their critics, which is in essence a historico-political debate. Or we might prefer a description in which a few of the same thinkers figure, for instance Jacobi and Fichte, but this time as cultural critics rather than theoreticians. On this scenario, they will be part of a major movement that will include such central personalities as Herder, Hamann, and Schiller, as well as many lesser figures. Their shared focus will mainly be the image of man (*Bild von Menschheit*)⁸ ensuing from both Kant's theoretical philosophy and his practical philosophy.⁹ If we endorse this description, the thrust of our

discussion will shift from philosophy to the ideological struggle between the Enlightenment and Romanticism.¹⁰

I do not wish to minimize the importance of taking these diverse descriptions into account if we are to arrive at a full and comprehensive understanding of the emergence of Hegel's philosophy, but my own description of this process here will emphasize the ongoing connection between theoretical reason and practical reason. By the term "practical reason," I am not referring to concrete political praxis, but rather, to ongoing scrutiny of the implications of a given thinker's theoretical views on the question of man, to the extent that this question is conceptually dependent on the philosophical theories out of which it emerged. To this end, I will restrict myself to exploring the relationship between Hegel and Hölderlin, and will not endeavor to construct an exhaustive list of ideas put forward by the German Idealists and invoked by Hegel in developing his own philosophy.¹¹

I have chosen Hölderlin because Hölderlin's intellectual biography vividly exemplifies the melding of the two possible paths to a definitive answer to the continuity question – the conceptual-philosophical and the cultural-historical – without making an unequivocal distinction between theoretical and practical reason. But the choice was not motivated solely by the desire for narrative economy, and was made primarily for a substantive reason, namely, the fact that Hölderlin was not only the pre-eminent exponent of the themes that would be the cornerstone of the Hegelian project, on my reading of it, but also because Hölderlin was the one who first sketched out the solution that Hegel would ultimately embrace. In analyzing Hölderlin's position, I will show how he articulates, for the first time, the fundamental problem that defines Hegel's philosophical project as a project that is both a theoretical-philosophical reflection mediated by diagnosis of the epoch, and at the same time, an effort to offer a normative justification for a society-based philosophy rather than an approach anchored in the individual.

2 Hölderlin and Hegel: on the break with Kant and critique of the concept of reflection

There were two separate phases in the relationship between Hegel and Hölderlin: the first, at the Tübingen theological seminary, from 1788 to 1790, the second in Frankfurt from 1797 to 1800.¹² They met in 1788 in Tübingen, where Schelling later joined them. They shared the same radical views, views that were actualized in the French Revolution, and expounded philosophically in the writings of Rousseau and Kant. By the

time they met again in Frankfurt in 1797, both Hegel and Hölderlin had adopted more refined and critical versions of the ideas they espoused in their seminary days. As we will see in the next chapter, Hegel's adoption of these ideas is manifest in his various theological-political writings from the Bern period, his first stop after leaving the Tübingen seminary.

Hölderlin had gone to Waltershausen, where – like Hegel in Bern – he had taken a post as a private tutor; it was there that he encountered Friedrich Schiller and Johann Gottlieb Fichte, and their respective philosophies. Both Hölderlin and Hegel underwent a gradual process of rejecting the ideas they had upheld while studying in Tübingen. This rejection, which seems to have initially reflected acceptance of Schiller's critique of the Kantian position and his aesthetic solution to the problems it raised,¹³ is evident in the first version of Hölderlin's epistolary novel *Hyperion*. Later, Hölderlin seems to have harnessed Fichte's theories both to critically re-examine his earlier ideals, and to articulate an alternative approach, an approach that appears to be a radicalization of those earlier ideals.

Hegel and Hölderlin maintained a vigorous correspondence until they met up again in Frankfurt in 1797. In their letters, we can trace the slow maturing of the critical impulse that will be reinforced by their encounter in Frankfurt. It is important to note that the fruits of the meeting in Frankfurt, as described in the "Fragment of a System" from 1800,¹⁴ were not generated by joint work to which each contributed equally. Rather, Hölderlin played a dominant role both in formulating a critique of the reflective philosophy of subjectivity, and in devising a possible solution. Indeed, Hegel's rejection of this solution – though not the critique that gave rise to it – in large measure defines the new philosophical project that Hegel soon embarks on, though it does not emerge as a fully-formed philosophical theory until the Jena period. After the Frankfurt encounter, however, Hegel completely severs his ties to Hölderlin, and never mentions him again in any context, either philosophical or biographical.

Before we explore the impact of Hölderlin's influence on Hegel, it will be useful to examine the process by which Hölderlin came to repudiate the Kantian view.

Hölderlin began his philosophical journey as an avowed admirer of Kantian philosophy. This is clear from letters he wrote during the years 1794–1795, in which he states, among other things, "For now, my only reading material, almost, is Kant. Gradually, this wonderful spirit is being revealed to me."¹⁵ Elsewhere, he compares Kant, in the extravagant language one would expect of a poet, to Moses: "Kant is the

Moses of our nation, who leads it out of Egyptian apathy into the free, solitary desert of his speculation, and who brings the rigorous law from the sacred mountain."¹⁶

But this explicit admiration of Kant, and especially his principle of the autonomy of reason as the primary expression of freedom and self-determination, takes a critical turn when Hölderlin, under the influence of Schiller's critique of Kant, considers the heavy price that is paid for realization of this ideal. Schiller's well-known critique targets the radical separation set down by Kantian ethics between nature and freedom, that is, between inclination and desire, on the one hand, and freedom, autonomy, and reason, on the other. Kant's espousal of this divide was by no means simply due to an inadequate acknowledgment of the profundity of human rootedness in nature, but was based on serious deliberation leading to the conclusion that the very essence of morality was its relegation to the sphere of reason alone. Schiller is well aware of the moral necessity of Kant's categorical demand that there be a clear divide between one's inclinations and one's duty, and is eager to accept it. But at the same time, he also demands that man's rootedness in nature be recognized, and this is the main thrust of his critique of Kant. Because Schiller has no interest in undermining Kantian ethics, he deals with the Kantian demand that the scope of moral action be strictly circumscribed by turning to the realm of the aesthetic as an alternative to grounding human morality in nature.

2.1 Schiller as a precursor to Hölderlin

Schiller attempts to give concrete expression to this agenda in two of his works. The first, *On Grace and Dignity* (*Über Anmut und Würde*), was written in 1793; the second, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man in a Series of Letters*, in 1795.¹⁷ In the former, Schiller suggests an important distinction, that between "freedom within nature" and "freedom from nature." "Freedom within nature" is supposed to describe a situation in which moral action does not arise from denying one's inclinations, but, rather, is in harmony with them. Schiller calls such actions acts of "grace." He sees the capacity to perform acts of grace, to act harmoniously and in correspondence with our inclinations, as a special capacity that is not to be understood in terms of reason, or of nature, but rather, in purely aesthetic terms. This leads Schiller to identify acts of grace with a specific personality – the "beautiful soul." Schiller is well aware that this proposed solution to the Kantian dichotomy is problematic, chiefly because it can be achieved only by a select few. In fact, Schiller suggests an alternative: the possibility of moral action that opts out of the confines of nature, that takes liberation from the bonds of nature to be the very essence of

free moral action. This distancing of the moral agent from nature leads to an inward turn, which is the only way for the moral agent to sustain the purity of moral action, and thereby sustain his own freedom as an individual. Unlike an act of grace, which is in harmony with nature, this act of turning inward is an act of honor. With this thesis, it seems that Schiller is acquiescing in, though reframing, the Kantian primacy of duty over inclination. This return to Kant in the second half of the essay well illustrates both Schiller's debt to Kant, and his efforts to find a way to diverge from the Kantian path. Accordingly, in *On Grace and Dignity*, Schiller is ultimately seeking a unifying framework or descriptive rubric within which he can incorporate acts of grace and – as in Kantian morality – dutiful acts motivated by respect for the obligation to obey the law, melding the urge to be independent of nature with the desire to anchor moral action in nature. Hence the importance of the work in question lies more in its presentation of the problem than in the solution it puts forward, since the process of searching for a unifying framework basically produces little more than the largely rhetorical insistence on the need to find a suitable rubric within which both grace and duty can be accommodated.

Schiller's second essay, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man in a Series of Letters*, reflects a more significant attempt to overcome the divide between "freedom within nature" and "freedom from nature." Why do I say more significant? Because it is in this essay that Schiller transfers the discussion to the socio-political sphere. He now frames resolution of the dilemma as a socio-political project to be carried out at the communal level, rather than a project to be undertaken by individuals. The state, as a system of social institutions, becomes the instrument responsible for generating the conditions that make possible resolution of the Kantian dilemma. Schiller states this explicitly in Letter 27, which summarizes the entire essay:

In the midst of the fearful kingdom of forces, and in the midst of the sacred kingdom of laws, the aesthetic impulse to form is at work, unnoticed, on the building of a third joyous kingdom of play and of semblance, in which man is relieved of the shackles of circumstance, and released from all that might be called constraint, alike in the physical and in the moral sphere.

...

The dynamic State can merely make society possible by letting one nature be curbed by another; the ethical State can merely make it

(morally) necessary by subjecting the individual will to the general will; the aesthetic State alone can make it real, because it consummates the will of the whole through the nature of the individual. Though it may be his needs which drive man into society, and reason which implants within him the principles of social behavior, beauty alone can confer upon him a social character.¹⁸

Schiller's turn to the realm of the social was of great importance not only because it sought to flesh out the aesthetic solution that had been envisaged in *Grace and Dignity*, and give it concrete substance by introducing the notion of man's aesthetic education. It was also profoundly important because it combined this detailed solution with a diagnosis of the historical era and its ills. The diagnosis amply demonstrated – in a manner that was not simply theoretical – the need to put forward a political–philosophical program as part of the wider effort to confront the implications of Kantian morality. From the perspective of *On the Aesthetic Education of Man in a Series of Letters* in its entirety, this diagnosis, which Schiller sets out mainly in Letter 6,¹⁹ might seem secondary to Schiller's proposed solution to the Kantian dilemma.

Schiller begins with the basic distinction between the individual's unchangeable personality, on which his autonomous will is dependent, and the changing externally-determined situation by which he is conditioned. Schiller invokes this distinction to explain how imagination and the impulse to play can serve to mediate between these two opposed features of human existence. This mediatory power is manifest in the experience generated by aesthetic activity.²⁰ Yet it is not Schiller's theoretical solution that Hölderlin and Hegel embrace; rather, it is his melding of philosophical analysis with critical diagnosis of the epoch. For as we will see, Hölderlin and Hegel reject Schiller's suggested resolution of the dichotomy, taking play to be no more than an anthropological solution that preserves Kantian dualism and provides no fundamental answer at the philosophical level. In their view, only a philosophical solution can determine the concrete historical reality, so that the practical-anthropological description of man will correspond to the theoretical description, a correspondence that will allow for re-emergence of the ideal of organic unity whose loss Schiller so deplores.

Hölderlin, like Hegel after him, not only adopts Schiller's formulation of the lost-unity problem, a formulation that was a standard element of the German Idealists' critique of Kant, but more strikingly, also adopts the "educational" component of Schiller's project. Though this component addresses the socio-political sphere, Schiller, like Kant before him,

did not, in the final analysis, intend it to be realized on a broad scale, but only by the few, the “select circles.” Indeed, it may even be that the educational component represents only a utopian ideal, as Schiller wrote at the end of *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*:

But does such a State of Aesthetic Semblance really exist? And if so, where is it to be found? As a need it must be in every finely attuned soul; as a realized fact, we are likely to find it, like the pure Church and the pure Republic, only in some few select circles, where conduct is governed, not by some soulless imitation of the manners and morals of others, but by the aesthetic nature we have made our own; where men make their way, with undismayed simplicity and tranquil innocence, through even the most involved and complex situations, free alike of the compulsion to infringe the freedom of others in order to assert their own, as of the necessity to shed their Dignity in order to manifest Grace.²¹

Hölderlin, in reading Schiller's essay, recognized the problematic nature of Kant's philosophy, and Schiller's inability to resolve it, impelling Hölderlin to take up the challenge himself and seek a solution.

Hölderlin's initial attempts to move beyond the confines of Kant's philosophy can be discerned in two fragmentary sketches, “On the Law of Freedom,” written in 1794, and “On the Concept of Punishment,” written in 1795.²² In both these sketches, Hölderlin adopts the Schillerian strategy of seeking aesthetic solutions to ethical problems. Yet he invokes Kantian orthodoxy itself to criticize Schiller's attempts to revert to the non-Kantian view and ground the ethical in the natural, that is, in inclination. In both these writings, Hölderlin, aligning himself with Kant and against Schiller, utterly rejects the notion of anchoring morality in nature, and rules out any possibility of adducing nature to justify morality. What is perplexing here is not simply that this view runs counter to Schiller's efforts to address the shortcomings of the Kantian account. Even more strikingly, it runs counter to the foundational ideals of Hölderlin's own poetics! For Hölderlin's early poetics are replete with explicitly pantheistic scenarios in which man neither confronts nature nor seeks to overcome it, but rather is an integral part of nature.

In light of this, it is surprising to find that, in the fragment on freedom, Hölderlin states the following:

The law of freedom, however, rules without any regard for the help of nature. Nature may or may not be conducive to its enactment,

it [the law of freedom] rules. Indeed, it presupposes a resistance in nature, for otherwise it would not rule. The first time that the law of freedom discloses itself to us, it appears as punishing. The origin of all our virtue occurs in evil. Thus morality can never be entrusted to nature.²³

Two arguments for separating the moral from the natural, or more precisely, for Hölderlin's rejection of the attempt to ground morality in the fact that we are natural beings, are suggested in this passage. The first is that it is meaningless to speak of morality unless there is an opposite concept relative to which morality is defined. Without such an opposite, it is meaningless to speak of a moral sense. Hölderlin's second argument has to do with the conflict between nature's role as a source of constant change, and the fact that morality must be anchored in a fixed and unchanging reality. This incongruity leads Hölderlin to claim that nature cannot serve as an appropriate source of moral action. It would seem, at least on the face of it, that Hölderlin is rejecting Schiller's rather limited attempt to re-anchor human action in nature, and instead upholding an uncompromising Kantian dualism. But from Hölderlin's writing from this period, and subsequent writings, it is clear that what comes across as endorsement of Kantian dualism is actually an acknowledgment of how very problematic this dualism is. Nevertheless, Hölderlin will ultimately claim that Kant is, unfortunately, correct. We can no longer turn to nature as an anchor for morality, and it is precisely for that reason that we have lost our oneness with nature, or to put it more accurately, we have lost the possibility of a harmonious relationship with nature. This loss forces us either to accept freedom and autonomy without unity, or, to seek a way to restore unity on the basis of a commitment to freedom and autonomy. Hölderlin considers himself obliged to take the second path, and this determines his poetic-philosophic program.

2.2 Hölderlin's "Fragment of Hyperion"

Hölderlin's search for this elusive organic unity corresponds, to a large degree, to the crystallization of his novel *Hyperion*, which he worked on intermittently from 1794 to 1799. When he first published what he titled "Fragment of Hyperion" in Schiller's literary journal *Neue Thalia*, he was still engaged in formulating the problems arising from the loss of oneness by describing the novel's hero in Kantian terms. The hero is driven by a desire for knowledge, a desire to come to know, through his own reason, the basis of all that exists, to discover, in Hölderlin's words, the "supreme secret which gives life or death." Yet it is clear that

this desire to discover the secret of Being cannot be satisfied, and the Kantian hero must remain unfulfilled. Yet the desire for knowledge is also an impulse that separates the Kantian hero from the world around him and leaves him alone and isolated from that which he yearns to know. After Hölderlin identifies the problem of the loss of unity, of the loneliness that ensues from the desire for knowledge, he attempts to provide an account of unity that will render this loneliness a necessary stage in the developmental process by which a higher and more noble unity is achieved. In the Introduction to the "Fragment of Hyperion," Hölderlin formulates what can be viewed as an anticipation or embryonic version of Hegel's concept of Spirit:

Es giebt zwei ideale unseres Daseyns: einen Zustand der höchsten Einfalt, wo unsre Bedürfnisse mit sich selbst, und mit unsere Kräften, und mit allem, womit wir in Verbindung stehen, durch die bloss Organisation der Natur, ohne unser Zuthun gegenseitige zusammenstimmen, und einen Zustand der höchsten Bildung, wo dasselbe statt finden würde bey unendlich vervielfältigten und verstärkten Bedürfnissen und Kräften, durch die Organisation, die wir uns selbst zu geben im Stand sind. Die exzentrische Bahn, die der Menschen, im Allgemeinen und Einzelnen, von einem Punkt zum andern durchläuf, scheint sich, nach ihren wesentlichen Richtungen immer gleich zu seyn.²⁴

In this passage from the philosophical Introduction, Hölderlin presents the idea that unity is a primordial state characterized by harmony between our needs and our abilities. We do not "return" to this state by recovering something that was lost, but by dint of our own activity, we can achieve a new mode of harmony. Reaching this harmony is a process that unfolds gradually, in several stages. It is Janus-faced, in that it encompasses both development of the individual qua subject who initiates and creates, and development of the universal, by means of which the individual goes through a process of "formation" (*Bildung*) that engenders the re-emergence of what appears to be the originary unity. But at this point it is clear that this unity, as the product of conscious human activity, differs from the originary unity, insofar as it reflects the notion of the autonomous subject whose activity generates the said harmony.

Despite the immense importance of this initial formulation for the emergence of the Hegelian concept of Spirit, the "Fragment of Hyperion" itself can hardly be said to meet the expectations Hölderlin raises in the

Introduction. It does not attempt to explore how the original unity is actually to be regained. Instead, it describes a hero who is motivated by strong feelings of nostalgia for a vanished past – a past that feeds his sense of loneliness and alienation from his surroundings – and leads him, time and again, to demand total knowledge or total surrender. In the body of the novel, the Introduction's attempt to claim that there is a way to regain the primordial unity via conscious human action is shown to be illusory. It is illusory because, among other things, at this point it is still not clear to Hölderlin how it is possible to continue upholding the Kantian synthesis without acknowledging that it necessarily undermines any possibility of realizing the demand for unity of nature and freedom. The solution Hölderlin arrives at to dispel the dissonance between freedom and the sought-after unity is love, understood as a non-rational capacity by means of which the lost unity can be experienced. This choice in effect represents abandonment of the ideal of rationality, though Hölderlin has not yet explicitly announced any such renunciation, despite having engaged in critique of rationality.

The "Fragment of Hyperion" thus constitutes a manifest expression of Hölderlin's dilemma vis-à-vis Kant – and in essence, the dilemma of the German Idealists generally. On the one hand, the "Fragment" clearly reflects criticism of Kant's philosophy, but on the other hand, just as clearly reflects a desire to maintain the Kantian synthesis, though it is far from evident how this can be accomplished without radically diverging from the Kantian path, to the point where it is, in effect, relinquished altogether. Indeed, Hölderlin does ultimately take the step of repudiating Kant's indifference to the implications of his dualistic philosophy, though not by confronting it directly. Rather, Hölderlin takes issue with Kant via Fichte, the philosopher who, it was hoped, could provide the conceptual framework that would resolve the dilemma in a satisfactory manner.²⁵

2.3 Fichte and Hölderlin

Hölderlin initially adopts the Fichtean solution, but as is attested to by three separate sources, all from around 1795, the year Hölderlin left Waltershausen for Jena, where he first encountered Fichte's philosophy, he soon came to reject it completely. These sources are the metrical version of *Hyperion*,²⁶ Hölderlin's correspondence with Hegel, and the philosophical fragment on "Judgment and Being," which expresses unequivocal opposition to the idea that the philosophy of the subject can provide a solution to the dilemma, upholding the idea that it constitutes the root of the dilemma to begin with.

Fichte's attempt to radicalize Kant by making the "I" itself into the source of the Absolute, and its self-negation the sole source of external objects – nature – which we then can know through an act of reflection, seems, at least at first glance, to succeed in avoiding Kantian dualism. Fichtean dualism avoids the dilemma by transforming the I, not into an entity that is dependent on and must confront nature, but rather into a force that regulates or, to use the Kantian term, "legislates for" nature through freely-willed acts. In light of the preceding exposition of the problem that motivated Schiller and Hölderlin, the philosophical appeal of Fichte's move for Hölderlin is obvious. In the I, Fichte seems to have put forward a unifying principle that can avoid the foundational problem Hölderlin formulated in "Fragment of Hyperion," the problem that had seemed, when he wrote the "Fragment," insurmountable. This problem, it will be recalled, was that of the dichotomy between two basic facts: the fact that we are creatures of nature, and the fact that we seek to exercise freedom. In the new, metrical version of "Hyperion," Hölderlin presents the Fichtean I in the guise of Hyperion as a young man who deliberately cuts himself off from his surroundings, and tries to find meaningful existence within himself, independently of the community in which he was raised. Intending to demonstrate that the Fichtean solution is untenable, Hölderlin bases the fictional character of Hyperion on the figure of the scholar as it is presented in Fichte's *Some Lectures concerning the Scholar's Vocation*, delivered in Jena in 1794.²⁷ The novel's protagonist ultimately discovers his need for an external natural world – not a world that he himself regulates, but a world that can endow his existence with additional meaning that enables him to attain the sought-after unity of freedom and nature.

Yet what might initially appear to be a return to Kant for the purpose of critiquing Fichte by highlighting yet again the need for a separation between, on the one hand, nature, and the other hand, the I – the active, cognizing subject – is, in fact, something quite different. Hölderlin is showing us how Fichte has radicalized the Kantian notion of reason. According to Fichte, the province of reason is the whole, the totality (*Ganze, Totalität*). It is encompassed within the first act of the Absolute I. Fichte's account does not constitute a solution to the Kantian problem of dualism, but rather affirms it: the divide between nature and freedom remains intact. According to Fichte, even if this divide cannot be overcome by rational means, it may still be bridgeable by other means, aesthetically, for instance, as was suggested by Schiller and Hölderlin himself in his earlier writings. From the manner in which the dialogue between Hyperion and the scholar²⁸ is conducted in the metrical version

of the novel, Hölderlin's line of thought is clear. Hölderlin is reluctant to invoke the notion of absolute control of nature, and seeks to replace it with that of absorption and integration. Not a notion of pantheistic absorption into the one, but a notion of acknowledged mutual dependence between the individual and his surroundings. The factors that move the individual to action are not envisaged as internal, as in Kant's notion of "self-construction," but as external causal factors unmediated by the individual's actions or knowledge.²⁹

This poetic critique, which combines admiration of Fichte with as yet not fully articulated rejection of his views, becomes more unequivocal when Hölderlin reads the first version of the *Wissenschaftslehre*, which was published around this time. In a programmatic letter to Hegel written on January 26, 1795,³⁰ Hölderlin shares with Hegel both his discovery of Fichte, and his critique of Fichte's arguments:

Fichte's speculative writings – Foundations of the Entire Science of Knowledge [*Grundlage der gesamten Wissenschaftslehre*] – also his published lectures about the Vocation of the Scholar [*Bestimmung des Gelehrten*] will interest you very much. In the beginning, I suspected him very much of dogmatism; he appears, if I may speculate, to have stood very much at the crossroads, or still to stand there –, he wants to move in theory beyond the factum of consciousness; many of his statements show that, and that is just as certain and even more strikingly transcendent than if the metaphysicians so far would move beyond the existence [*Dasein*] of the world – his Absolute "I" [*Ich*] (= Spinoza's Substance) contains all reality; it is everything, and outside of it there is nothing; ...there is therefore no object for this "I", for otherwise not all of reality would be within it; however, a consciousness without an object cannot be thought, and if I myself am this object, then I am as such necessarily restricted, even if it were only within time, hence not absolute; therefore, within the absolute "I," no consciousness is conceivable; as Absolute "I" I have no consciousness, and insofar as I have no consciousness I am (for myself) nothing, hence is the Absolute "I" (for me) nothing.³¹

At the heart of this letter is the suspicion of "dogmatism" that Fichte's "Absolute I" arouses in Hölderlin. Hölderlin takes this dogmatism to constitute a reversion to the mode of thought that forgoes what he refers to as the basic "facticity of consciousness." Hölderlin's insistence on retaining the factual nature of consciousness reveals the importance he ascribes to the fundamental necessity of the subject-object

model as a condition for the possibility of self-consciousness, or to put it differently, as a condition for the possibility of the autonomous I. According to Hölderlin, this model of a fundamental divide between subject and object as a necessary condition for the possibility of self-consciousness is the factor that can ensure the self-consciousness of a particular individual who encounters an object and seeks unity with it. Fichte contends that the separateness model of self-consciousness can be overcome by assuming a principle that embraces all of reality, but Hölderlin argues that this necessarily undermines the possibility of self-consciousness, since the existence of an object outside of consciousness is a condition for the very possibility of self-consciousness. Hölderlin cannot accept Fichte's claim that the unity he desires is grounded in the negation of that which makes its existence possible. For if the Absolute I is determinate, then there can be nothing outside it, in which case the I cannot be characterized by self-consciousness, and must be something like Spinoza's Substance, and this would necessarily render Fichte's philosophy dogmatic. But Hölderlin also affirms the opposite argument, according to which it is impossible to begin from the I as self-consciousness, transforming it into an absolute principle, since as soon as it becomes absolute, it can no longer be characterized as self-conscious.

What the letter to Hegel deems "suspect of dogmatism" creates a certain ambiguity regarding Hölderlin's intentions. On the one hand, the suspicion can be taken to imply that Hölderlin reaffirms Kantian dualism, contra Fichte's attempt to make the I a transcendental principle that posits itself beyond the realm of consciousness, beyond, we might say, the realm of any possible experience. But on the other hand, the expression can also be taken more literally.

The text reads "At first I suspected him of dogmatism." This can be taken at face value, as saying no more than that while there was indeed an initial suspicion of dogmatism, it was just that – an initial suspicion, which was allayed by the manner in which Fichte proceeded to develop his argument. On this literal reading of the letter, this elaboration of the argument makes clear that Fichte does not posit the Absolute I as a transcendent entity, as something in existence outside of consciousness, but only as an argument for the primacy of action, of moral praxis, over theoretical determinations.

This ambiguity attests, in my view, to a dilemma that confronted Hölderlin. Kant's philosophy could not satisfy the unity requirement, Fichte's attempt to do so by means of the Absolute I was equally untenable, and thus a return to the dogmatic approach seemed the only way

to move forward, yet Hölderlin could not accept it. Fichte's attempt to claim that he was simply affirming the primacy of action over theory does not constitute a solution to Hölderlin's dilemma, since in the final analysis, it is no different from the Kantian solution to the unity problem – the problem of unity between man as natural being and man as autonomous and creative. The putative Kantian solution left the problem unresolvable, inasmuch as it could not close the gap between the experiencing subject and the object on which the subject is dependent. What dogmatism can supply is a unity that is not dependent on self-consciousness, but once self-consciousness is posited, dogmatic unity cannot be achieved, or at least cannot be achieved by invoking the knowing subject. In an unfinished play on the death of Empedocles, Hölderlin presents the fact that ultimately there can be no extrication from this dilemma as an insurmountable tragedy. The incomplete final version was written shortly before he completely gave up on his search for a conceptual or poetic way out of the dilemma.

2.4 Hölderlin's "On Judgment and Being"

Before ending his quest, and even before writing the play, Hölderlin made one last attempt to formulate the problem of the loss of unity and to outline a possible way out of the impasse. This attempt is a fragment entitled "On Judgment and Being" (*Urtheil und Seyn*).³² In a letter to one of his friends, Hölderlin says the following about his philosophical intentions in this fragment:

In the philosophical letters, I want to discover the principle which explains to me the divisions in which we think and exist, yet which is also capable of dispelling the conflict between subject and object, between our self and the world, yes, also between reason and revelation, – theoretically, in intellectual intuition, without our practical reason having to come to our aid. For this we need an aesthetic sense, and I will call my philosophical letters "New Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man." Also, I will move in [these letters] from philosophy to poetry and religion.³³

In this sketch, Hölderlin explicitly defines the objective of philosophical inquiry: a theoretical principle – and Hölderlin emphasizes this characterization – that can fulfill two distinct roles at the same time. First, it must clarify the bifurcations that pervade our lives, both inner and outer. These bifurcations are manifest in fundamental oppositions such as self/world; reason/revelation. Hölderlin's underlying assumption

is that it is possible to be aware of these oppositions only if there is a unifying principle that serves as a precondition for the possibility of grasping the concept of opposition in general. The second role of the philosophical principle Hölderlin is seeking is that it must allow for reconciliation of the said opposites; this can only be accomplished by reinstating the unifying principle, which is, in the final analysis, the source of the bifurcation.

Yet again adopting a Schillerian idea, Hölderlin indicates that a philosophical solution to the bifurcation problem can only emerge from the aesthetic realm. In proposing the aesthetic realm as the source of a possible solution to the bifurcation problem, on the one hand, and in his characterization of the object of philosophical inquiry, on the other, Hölderlin's philosophical break with Kant and Fichte is manifest. For Kant is the foremost representative of the position that bifurcation is a natural necessity that cannot, as a matter of principle, be eliminated or overcome, a stance Hölderlin cannot endorse. And Hölderlin breaks with Fichte because he cannot accept the putative practical solution of affirming – by transforming the dualistic principle into an absolute principle – a fundamental dichotomy between subject and object (in Fichte's language, between the I and the not-I) without really overcoming this divide.

The programmatic declaration of Hölderlin's philosophical agenda is elaborated on only slightly in the fragment itself, where Hölderlin addresses the distinction between Being and identity, and the conceptual connection between these notions and that of unity. He defines Being as follows:

Being – expresses the connection between subject and object. Where subject and object are united altogether and not only in part, that is, united in such a manner that no separation can be performed without violating the essence of what is to be separated, there and nowhere else can be spoken of *Being proper*.³⁴

Being, then, is the “originary” (*ursprüngliche*) unity of subject and object, and sustains these distinct essences, inviolate and inseparable. Identity, on the other hand, is unity that presupposes separation, hence, Hölderlin explains, “this Being must not be confused with identity.” Hölderlin adduces the identity “I = I” as an example of the distinction between Being and identity. The very act of self-consciousness presupposes the separateness of the knowing I and the known I. There is no real unity here, but rather the I must juxtapose itself to itself

in order to recognize itself as remaining the same throughout that act of self-recognition. Hölderlin therefore asserts that separateness is an inherent element of the "I = I" identity, hence the unity that is being asserted in a statement of identity cannot be the absolute unity of Being.

If I say: I am I, the subject (I) and the object (I) are not united in such a way that no separation could be performed without violating the essence of what is to be separated; on the contrary, the I is only possible by means of this separation of the I from the I.... hence identity is not = to absolute Being.³⁵

The basic account that was articulated in Hölderlin's earlier writings is present here too: originary unity, separation, restoration of the lost unity. Here, however, in contrast to the literary and poetic devices that characterized the presentation of this thesis in *Hyperion* and in the early poems, the terminology used is not dramatic or poetic, but straightforward, neutral, and analytical. Use of the concept "judgment" is deliberate; it was chosen to convey a radical stance toward understanding and reason, which are presented not only as lacking the capacity to restore the lost unity – as we said, this feature of the account in the "On Judgment and Being" fragment is by no means novel – but also as having caused the lost unity in the first place. Singling out the intellect as the factor responsible for the separation, the loss of the originary unity, leads Hölderlin to explore various possible directions for resolving the unity problem, directions that entail either neutralizing the role of the intellect, as Hegel will ultimately choose to do, or altogether rejecting it as a restorative force, the direction that Hölderlin will pursue. The act of judgment³⁶ gives rise to the primordial separation that makes possible the subject–object distinction, yet at the same time, it is the source for the necessary positing of the "whole" within the framework of which subject–object differentiation exists.

Judgment [*Urtheil*] in the highest and strictest sense, is the original separation of object and subject which are most deeply united in intellectual intuition, [judgment is] that separation through which alone object and subject become possible, the *arche*-separation [*Ur-Teilung*].³⁷

Judgment, which is indeed the most salient means by which thought – today, we would say "language," in the broadest sense of the term – is

expressed, entails separation and differentiation. Every act of judgment, and indeed, all knowledge, presupposes separateness, inasmuch as it necessarily presupposes the existence of something that is not consciousness. But this knowledge, these judgments, are only possible on the assumption of an originary unity. In his description of this originary unity, Hölderlin parts company with Fichte, taking it to be, not the self-identity of the Fichtean Absolute Ego – $I = I$ – but rather, the unity of Being that is given to intellectual intuition (*intellektuelle Anschauung*). Self-consciousness ($I = I$) can exist only insofar as it is grounded in differentiation, and therefore, even in its most absolute form, the I cannot serve as its own unifying principle.

But here too, Hölderlin's conflicted relationship to Kantianism is manifest. On the one hand, he uses a Kantian argument to dispute the possibility of the Fichtean Absolute I , but on the other hand, in asserting that the Absolute can be known, not as self-consciousness, but as Being, he is also explicitly rejecting the Kantian doctrine.³⁸ In so doing, Hölderlin is, to a great extent, anticipating the foundations of the position Hegel will subsequently espouse, which, in searching for a philosophical analysis of the Absolute, vacillates between focusing on the epistemic considerations associated with the philosophy of the subject, and ontological considerations. It is important to stress that despite the apparent affinity between Hölderlin's idea of the unity of Being, especially the fact that it can be grasped by intellectual intuition, and pre-critical dogmatic philosophy, the idea that Being is knowable should not be seen as simply a reversion to dogmatic ontology of the type characteristic of this period.³⁹ For Hölderlin is seeking a new conceptual framework that, accepting the basic parameters of Kantian philosophy, will go beyond both pre-critical ontology, and the reflective philosophy of self-consciousness, yet in doing so, will at the same time also go beyond both Kant's, and Fichte's, philosophies. And this conceptual framework is aesthetics, the aesthetics whose theoretical expression is the poetics at the heart of Hölderlin's literary endeavor and whose concrete "real life" expression is love.

A letter from Hölderlin to Schiller makes clear that while poetics as aesthetics, and love as its realization, are pathways to Being, knowledge of which Hölderlin aspires to, fulfillment of this goal cannot be taken for granted. This supports my contention that Hölderlin does not purport to overturn Kant and claim that, through aesthetics, there is a possibility of direct and unmediated access to the thing in itself. Hölderlin expresses his acceptance of the Kantian tenet that there is no possibility of knowing the thing in itself very clearly:

I attempt to develop for myself the idea of an infinite progress of philosophy [and] to show that the relentless condition to be posited to every philosophical system, [namely,] the union of the subject and the object in an absolute "I" or however one wants to call it, – is indeed possible aesthetically in intellectual intuition, theoretically however only as an infinite approximation, like the approximation of the square to the circle.⁴⁰

Hölderlin's skepticism, expressed in this letter to Schiller about the possibility that theoretical and practical knowledge can truly overcome the fundamental separation, is conceptually grounded in the conclusion reached in "On Judgment and Being," where Hölderlin links Being to judgment through the reciprocal negation that renders knowledge of one of these concepts impossible without thereby negating the other. If we want to know absolute Being, that is, unity, we must overcome the separation inherent in judgment, knowledge, and reflection,⁴¹ yet every judgment, and all knowledge, arises from separation – separation that presupposes a unity that cannot be known without the separation from which it arises. Hölderlin thus confronts a conceptual aporia, an impasse, between, on the one hand, unity and Being, and on the other, judgment and knowledge. Unity and Being are realized through reflective determinations made by the I, but the existence of the I presupposes the concept of unity. This aporia is the basis of Hölderlin's skepticism about the possibility of knowing the Absolute, both at the theoretical level, and even at the practical level à la Fichte. Yet although this skeptical conclusion impels Hölderlin to break with Fichte, and in essence, with the entire "philosophy of subjectivity" tradition from Descartes on,⁴² it does not lead him to radical skepticism, to abandoning any attempt to say something about the Absolute. That sort of radical skepticism would have been tantamount to completely giving up on the search for the originary unity. But Hölderlin does not give up on his search; he continues it by means of aesthetics and poetics, through which he seeks a non-epistemic resolution of the aporia over how knowledge of the Absolute is to be attained.

If we take the three sources – the metrical version of "Hyperion," the letter to Hegel, and the fragment "On Judgment and Being" – to be a progression building up to a final conclusion reached in the fragment, the development can be summarized as follows: Hölderlin does not offer an analytic interpretation of Fichte, but rather, his debate with Fichte is in essence a critique of the entire philosophical mode of thought. Philosophical thought is shown to be inadequate as a means of reaching

the absolute and unitary foundation of phenomenal multiplicity. For every act of reflection generates differentiation between the act of judgment and its object, between thinking and what is thought. Kant and Schiller were thus right, in the final analysis: it isn't possible to use knowledge itself as a means of transcending the limits of knowledge.⁴³ The only thing we can do is attempt to reach those limits through an infinite process of successive approximations. As reflection can never grasp its ultimate source, it will never be able to overcome the opposition between the I and the world, the I and society. This can be achieved only by art, that is, the creative artist's individual endeavor. Art can grasp the source of the originary unity between subject and object, but theorizing and practical-ethical action cannot. At best, they can only seek to approach it more and more closely.⁴⁴

2.5 Hölderlin's *Hyperion*

In the last version of *Hyperion*, the first part of which was published in 1797, and the second in 1799, Hölderlin implements, as it were, what we have characterized as the philosophical conclusion to be drawn from the fragment "On Judgment and Being."⁴⁵ In a series of letters, this version offers a description of the vicissitudes of the development of reason as outlined above, in the form of an account of the adventures of the novel's protagonist, Hyperion, who recounts the stories in the course of recalling the events of his past. Narrating these events allows Hyperion to make sense of them, and retrospectively come to an understanding of their significance. The two-track format of describing an event while at the same time reflecting on it and reconceptualizing it may sound familiar – it will soon be adopted as the foundational framework not only of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*, understood as a kind of bildungsroman, but indeed, of his philosophy of Spirit in general. Hyperion's letters to Bellarmin describe his persistent efforts to arrive at the state of unity with the world; each character in the novel represents a possible model of the path to this utopian state. It is clear that ultimately, the sought-after state can only be attained by means of reflection on his past experiences.

The novel describes events that take place in 1770, during an attempted rebellion of the Greeks against their Turkish overlords. Hyperion is a young Greek from the island of Tina, whose revered teacher Adamas imbues in him an appreciation of the glories of ancient Greece, now irretrievably lost. These lessons are nostalgic and sentimental in nature, but Hyperion is not satisfied with nostalgia, which cannot advance his quest to regain the lost unity. On Adamas's model, there is no way to achieve

unity in the present, except vicariously through identifying with past unity. Hyperion becomes friends with Alabanda, the novel's political reformer, who represents the activist approach in the quest for unity. Together, the two set out to fight the Turks and realize the ancient Greek ideal of autonomy – *autarkia* – a life of study and political activity that instantiates the ideal of harmony.

Hyperion and Alabanda share a passionate commitment to the ideals of human freedom and fellowship, what we might today call social solidarity:

The new union of spirits cannot live in the air, the sacred theocracy of the Beautiful must dwell in a free state, and that state must have a place on earth, and that place we shall surely conquer.... Servitude kills, but just war brings every soul to life.⁴⁶

Yet this idealistic partnership comes to an end due to a dispute over the nature of the struggle for liberation – how radical ought it to be? The two part company when Hyperion discovers that Alabanda has, all the while, been a member of a secret society, the “League of Nemesis” (*Bund der Nemesis*), which seeks to achieve the goals of independence and fellowship by means of violent struggle. Only in the existential situation of violent struggle, it claims, do the ideals of freedom and fellowship have value. Hyperion rejects any attempt to resort to violence to realize his ideals, or to put it more positively, to make achievement of the utopian goal dependent on experiencing battle, acting heroically, and confronting death. He views the resort to violence as a brutalization of the ideals he so ardently wishes to implement.⁴⁷ Hyperion's deep disappointment with the failure of his ideological alliance with Alabanda completely demoralizes him. His inability to realize his ideals without their being reduced to empty nostalgia, on the one hand, or his being drawn into terrible bloodshed, on the other, renders him disheartened and dejected.

Only upon meeting Diotima, the novel's third heroic figure, does Hyperion emerge from his depression. Like the others, she represents a possible model for the ideal of freedom and the path thereto. In contrast to them, however, her very existence, in and of itself, is an embodiment of the selfsame unity that Adamas and Alabanda must seek outside themselves by choosing a course of action and pursuing it. In her very being, Diotima represents a paradigm of the ideal of freedom and unity with nature, and Hyperion's love for her is an effort to become part of that unity.

Hölderlin, through Hyperion, ascribes to Diotima a further important quality that connects the aesthetic path to unity she represents to the political-social justice path represented by Alabanda. She is depicted as an ideal figure whose character is free of any internal power-struggles, any domination-based relations. As we will see, this image seems to be a rudimentary sketch for what will be the focal point of the Hegelian dialectic. On my reading, the Hegelian dialectic constitutes a complex conceptual attempt to eliminate all domination relationships.

In one of the letters in which he describes Diotima, Hyperion is clearly referring to the state characterized by the absence of domination:

To be, to live – that is enough, that is the honor of the gods; and therefore all things that but have life are equal in the divine world, and in it there are no masters and servants. natures live together, like lovers; they hold all in common, spirit, joy, and eternal youth.⁴⁸

Just as Hyperion relates to Diotima as the personification of the ideal of unity, so he relates to classical Greece and the ethos of its public life. Yet for Hölderlin, identifying ancient Greek culture with Diotima brings to the fore the drawback of the passive ideal of Hyperion's love for Diotima as a model for the path to unity. For this love for Diotima is limited to his own inner life, and cannot be generalized into a universal social ideal. If Diotima personifies only the ideal of nature and the aspiration to become one with nature through love, this cannot be the paradigm for universal social harmony. Hyperion's recognition that the ideal represented by Diotima cannot be generalized saps Hyperion of the ability to act. The first part of the novel ends with a description of the inadequacy of the route represented by Diotima, and in fact, with what seems to be the relinquishing, as a matter of principle, of the very ideal of unity. Hence the first part of *Hyperion* reiterates the conclusion of the fragment "On Judgment and Being," according to which we, as rational and reflective beings, are condemned to an irreparably bifurcated existence. The process that began with Adamas, proceeded to Alabanda, and ended with Diotima well illustrates this. At each stage, in every description of one of these three characters, there is a moment when it seems as if unity has been achieved, yet soon it becomes clear that, due precisely to the human propensity for reflection, the promise of unity does not bear fruit. At the end of the first part, therefore, it seems as if our fate is an unending Sisyphean oscillation between finding the sought-after ideal of unity within reach, and necessarily failing to achieve it.

The second part of the novel highlights the feeling that this tragic fate is all but inexorable. It recounts what happens to Alabanda and Diotima after Hyperion's discovery of their inadequacy. Alabanda, still actively pursuing his goal of social justice, re-enters Hyperion's life. Now involved in a peasant uprising in the Peloponnese, Alabanda tries to persuade Hyperion to take part in the war between Russia and the Ottoman Empire, an actual historical event generally known as the 1770 Russo-Turkish War, on the assumption that the war will bring about the liberation of Greece. Hyperion, convinced by these arguments, reconciles with Alabanda and offers to join him in fighting the Turks. But what appears to be a decision entered into freely soon leads to great loss and disappointment. Alabanda falls in battle. With his demise, the path he represented is shown to be unsustainable. Hölderlin reserves a similarly tragic fate for Diotima: in a farewell letter, Hyperion informs her that he intends to sacrifice his life for the cause to which he and Alabanda had devoted themselves. In response, Diotima loses her will to live; ironically, Hyperion survives the war.

This dual loss, underscoring, as it does, the impossibility of realizing the ideal of unity, intensifies Hyperion's despair. He abandons his revolutionary endeavors and seeks refuge in Germany. To his dismay, the society he finds there is devoid of any spiritual dimension, and engaged solely in materialistic pursuits. The prevailing division of labor alienates the individual from his natural surroundings and from his peers.⁴⁹

In the context of the novel, Hyperion's decision to go to Germany seems an outlandish turn of events. Our puzzlement is dispelled, however, if we recall what we identified as the primary motivation for Hölderlin's philosophical poetics – a motivation we will also ascribe to Hegel – viz., the desire to offer a historico-political diagnosis of his era. The invocation of Germany is not surprising, given that the thrust of the criticism that arises from Hyperion's experiences is directed mainly at Germany's social and cultural ethos. In other words, this ethos is mirrored not only in the era's philosophical theories, as noted above apropos the fragment "On Judgment and Being," but also in its concrete realities, as depicted in Hyperion's dismal accounts of German society. Despondent about the state of affairs in Germany, Hyperion returns to Greece, and begins reflecting on what he has been through. This process of reflection proves fruitful, yielding clues about Hölderlin's solution to the dilemma of the perpetually-elusive ideal of unity.

Hyperion's reflections on his adventures and experiences provide a philosophical summation of the deeper meaning of *Hyperion* as a whole. The two letters with which the novel opens clearly articulate despair,

resignation, and acquiescence in the inability of rational human action to influence historical events and shape the collective endeavor. When Bellarmin asks Hyperion to recount his past experiences, Hyperion describes his life up to that point as follows:

I have nothing of which I may say that it is mine. Distant and dead are my loved ones, and no voice brings me news of them anymore. My business on earth is over. I set to work full of determination, I gave my blood to it, and made the world not a penny the richer.⁵⁰

The factor Hyperion adduces as responsible for this passivity, this complete disavowal of any capacity to make a difference, is reflection. In explaining the source of his despondency to Bellarmin, Hyperion seems to be voicing the same thesis he upheld in "On Judgment and Being":

I reflect, and find myself as I was before – alone, with all the griefs of mortality, and my heart's refuge, the world in its eternal oneness, is gone; Nature closes her arms, and I stand like an alien before her and do not understand her.⁵¹

Hyperion assigns the responsibility for the alienation generated by reflection – for the confrontation with nature's unyieldingness and inscrutability that makes it impossible to feel at home, to enjoy nature as a familiar base for the search for a new unity – to "your schools," namely, the academies that teach science and philosophy:

O! had I never gone to your schools! The knowledge which I pursued down its tunnels and galleries, from which, in my youthful folly, I expected confirmation of all my pure joy – that knowledge has corrupted everything for me.

Among you I became so truly reasonable, learned so thoroughly to distinguish myself from what surrounds me, that now I am solitary in the beautiful world, an outcast from the garden of Nature, in which I grew and flowered, and am drying up under the noonday sun.⁵²

Knowledge is the source of the isolation and estrangement from nature that overcomes Hyperion upon his return to Greece after attempting to take concrete action to realize his goals, but prior to the process of recollection and analysis that Bellarmin's request sets in motion. As the end of the novel makes clear, ultimately this process proves sufficient to extricate Hyperion from the existential emptiness that has paralyzed

him. In recalling and reflecting on past events, Hyperion re-constitutes his identity and brings about a significant shift in consciousness. He once again recognizes in himself the liberating ability to be at one with nature, an ability he had lost when that direct rapport with his surroundings was corrupted by academic pursuits.

It is interesting that this dramatic reversal of consciousness, expressed in the ability to shake off the pathology that had prevented Hyperion – who represents humankind in general – from being at one with nature, was achieved via distancing. Hyperion's liberation was achieved through a process whereby he was at a certain remove from the people and places in question, but mentally re-lived the experiences he had undergone. (Note that this interpretation of the process of mental re-construction of the events in question as a kind of "liberation" is only apt if the reverse process is understood as a "closing" of nature that is generated by the distancing that arises from the process of philosophical reflection.) The transformation created by the process of re-construction is evident in the very last letter, which ends both the re-construction and the novel itself. In this letter, the re-constructed past and Hyperion's present merge. The alienation, despondency, and futility that had enveloped Hyperion have been replaced by full acceptance of, and harmony with, the world around him. Hyperion has overcome the distancing generated by philosophical reflection, which has now been superseded by integration into the natural environment. Hölderlin/Hyperion discovers that he has been freed from the estrangement when, to use his own idiom, he senses that nature has come back, opened her arms, and once again allowed him to experience "eternal unity," or as he describes it:

Bellarmin! never had I so fully experienced the old unchanging decree of Rite [*Schiksaalwort*] that a new bliss rises in the heart when it perseveres and suffers through the midnight of anguish, and that, like nightingale voices in the dark, the world's song of life first sounds divinely for us in deep affliction. For I now lived with the blooming trees as with geniuses, and the clear brooks that flowed under them whispered the care from my breast like divine voices.⁵³

Hyperion continues his rapturous description of the sensory experiences attendant upon union with nature until the concluding sentence, which melds the destination he has arrived at with the starting point of his journey, so that it can be inferred that he is setting off anew. But this time the point of departure is understood differently. The ideal of unity, which appeared unattainable at the outset, has actually been realized.

The concluding sentence is thus a manifesto for the coming Hegelian project (at least on my reading of it):

Like lovers' quarrels are the dissonances of the world. Reconciliation is there, even in the midst of strife, and all things that are parted find one another again.⁵⁴

Alienation and separation were salient themes in Hölderlin's work from his very earliest writings. The uniqueness of the novel *Hyperion* is the suggestion, albeit in a very tentative and embryonic form, of what will become the primary argument of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, and of Hegel's philosophy in general. For *Hyperion* is the paradigm of a reflective process that, starting off from diagnosis of an era's deficiencies, serves as the engine for a process that allows us to re-evaluate an ideal we initially took to be utopian and unattainable. Hegel extracts this paradigm, transforming it from a principle applicable to personal experience to a principle that addresses the political and social dimensions of reality as a whole. In the course of his writings, Hegel elaborates and improves on the form of this paradigm, but in terms of content, the theme with which Hölderlin concludes his epistolary novel remains one of Hegel's central concerns. As I said, this concern is addressed by Hegel on the socio-political plane, that is, at the level of civil society. In other words, Hölderlin addressed the *individual's* alienation from nature, which is induced by reflection, whereas Hegel addresses *socio-political* alienation.

Of course, Hegel does not simply transfer the Hölderlinian treatment of alienation *tout court* to a broader context, just as Hölderlin did not simply take Rousseau's concept of alienation and transfer it to the Romantic context of man's alienation from nature. For to some extent, Hegel rejects Hölderlin's assumption of a direct dependence of the political on the natural. On Hölderlin's view, man's relationship to nature is replicated in the political nexus, that is, the desire for ascendancy over nature recurs in the political realm in the form of domination relations. Although on the one hand, Hegel indeed rejects the notion that there is a simple correspondence between the two realms, on the other, he accepts the critique implicit in this claim. That is, he accepts the critique that, with respect to the relationship between the individual and nature, the reflective model of cognition generates domination relations (specifically, the object's dependence on the subject). In other words, Hölderlin's treatment of the individual's alienation from nature already alludes, to a certain extent, to socio-political relations. Hegel,

severing the direct connection between these two themes, develops the latter and makes it a central focus of his thought.⁵⁵

2.6 Hölderlin's "Death of Empedocles"

The complex dynamic by means of which Hölderlin characterizes the individual's relationship with nature as analogous to the individual's relationship to other people, or in essence, to a specific political order, is somewhat oblique in *Hyperion*, where the alienation-from-nature–return-to-nature nexus is built into the narration of a series of political events pertaining to the Greek struggle for freedom from Turkish domination. It is more explicit in the various versions of Hölderlin's unfinished tragedy "The Death of Empedocles," and in a theoretical essay entitled "The Ground for Empedocles" ("Grund zum Empedokles") that is appended to the third version. In this essay, Hölderlin sets out the theoretical analysis that the tragic poem is intended to embody.

The figure of the pre-Socratic philosopher Empedocles, as set forth in Diogenes Laertius' *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, is the focus of Hölderlin's poem. In the first version of the poem, Hölderlin sets out the background to Empedocles' death, presenting him as an ineffectual prophet and thus a tragic figure. A uniquely-sensitive observer of society and its mores, Empedocles is anguished by his awareness of the acute indifference of his fellows to the social crises besetting their polis, and the need for radical changes in its moral and public life. Despite the polis' outward appearance of prosperity and contentment, Empedocles takes on the role of 'preacher at the gate' (cf. Ps. 127:5, Prov. 8:3), admonishing his peers that their seeming prosperity is but a thin veneer covering a morally-bankrupt society. Warning them that the future of their society is in jeopardy unless they change their ways significantly, he implores them to take a higher path. But his insight is scorned, and his pleas go unheeded. Society's unwillingness to heed the voice of reason is the basis for the key dilemma at the heart of the poem. How is Empedocles to proceed, how can he bring about change? The poem explores the tragedy of Empedocles' arrogance in presuming to understand nature's workings well enough to dominate nature and use it to satisfy his own desires. The poem traces the expressions of this haughty attitude in various contexts, as they lead inexorably to Empedocles' tragic end, when, unable to avoid surrendering to the power of nature, he recognizes that only by completely losing oneself in nature, and becoming one with it, can man gain any control over nature. Empedocles' attempt to gain power over nature by learning its secrets and thereby breaking down its unity and presuming to rule over it ends in utter failure, as

nature re-emerges triumphant, its unity uncompromised. Hölderlin's recounting of the Empedocles story is unusual inasmuch as it emphasizes not just the arrogance of presuming to master the secrets of nature and its unity, but more importantly, the implications of doing so for the sake of the social and political order.

The poem focuses on the need to forge a new relationship with nature in order to bring about cultural and social renewal and political liberation. This liberation will arise from recognition of the significance of Empedocles' heroic-tragic act of sacrificing himself to achieve renewed unity with nature. Empedocles saw himself as responsible for the loss of the originary unity, which he brought about through his arrogant attempts to control nature, and for the ensuing alienation. Empedocles is depicted as an Enlightenment figure who gains awareness of the implications of his initial insistence on liberation from what he perceived as nature's domination; this liberation proves just as tyrannical as the domination from which he had struggled to free himself. So intense is the guilt that accompanies this discovery, that Empedocles can find release from it only by sacrificing his life. The efforts of the enlightened thinkers to liberate themselves from the constraints of nature are thus overshadowed by tragedy and blind fate, but this is not an inexorable destiny that cannot be escaped. For Empedocles' heroic deed sends a political and educational message to the society that nurtured him. At the outset of the poem, Empedocles is a kind of Sartrean singular universal: he is at one with nature and with the gods, a situation that enables him to enjoy social relations free of any taint of domination. This idyllic situation comes to an abrupt end when Empedocles attempts to gain control of nature, but his death restores the unity with nature and revives the possibility of social relations that are free of domination.

Hölderlin emphasizes the interdependence of this possibility and Empedocles' act of self-sacrifice right before the end of the poem, when the citizens of Agrigentum seek to make Empedocles their king, but he refuses, preferring to die. He does so to realize the goal of total liberation from any sort of domination, for although he has been offered political power, and the status of tyrant, he knows that this will not enable him to regain the idyllic harmony he is seeking. Indeed, not just tyranny, but any political regime, is inherently based on domination relations.

2.7 Hölderlin, Hegel, and tragedy

My account of Hölderlin's "Death of Empedocles" has not offered a critical analysis of Hölderlin's treatment of the relationship between politics and nature. Readers must keep in mind that the present chapter is

an exploration of the German Idealists' philosophical motivations, for the purpose of situating Hegel within the context of German Idealism. Analysis of Hölderlin's works will be helpful in explaining my reading of the development of Hegel's thought. Hölderlin's works clearly exhibit a thematic affinity with the Kantian–Fichtean philosophical “move,” inasmuch as they focus on the concepts of alienation, harmony, originary unity, domination relations, love, struggle, sacrifice, and tragedy. Transposed into Hegel's works, these themes will be rigorously conceptualized, making it difficult to recognize the affinity with Hölderlin. Yet the fact that Hegel's starting point is Hölderlin's response to Kant is, from our perspective, significant not only with respect to Hegel's socio-political theories, but also with respect to his purely theoretical ideas. I do not intend to suggest that my take on the development of Hegelian philosophy will rest solely on the claim that Hegel reformulated Hölderlin's views in a much more abstract form. The intention of the present discussion is to show that the themes underlying Hölderlin's work constitute the programmatic framework within which the Hegelian project can be best understood. This explains why I have not sought to present a point-by-point comparison of Hölderlin and Hegel, or to mine their respective biographies for the purpose of tracing who influenced whom, and to what degree; who expressed a given idea first. That kind of intellectual history will not be our focus here, but rather, we will seek to understand how the philosophical project of Hölderlin, Hegel, Schelling, and others can be viewed as a response to the malaise of the era as embodied in the Kantian system.

At the same time, my decision to end the description of the thematic background to the emergence of Hegel's thought with “The Death of Empedocles” is by no means merely an attempt to provide a chronologically-accurate survey of Hölderlin's thought. My explanation of Hölderlin seeks to present a possible motivation for Hegel's recourse to philosophical conceptualization rather than aesthetic self-expression in addressing the problem of alienation. Overall, Hegel's project can be characterized as an attempt to overcome the tragic. It is motivated by a series of struggles, with regard to each of which, the surmounting of a “tragic” solution is a step toward the total overcoming of tragedy. According to Hegel, tragedy does not reflect the essence of human existence, or the essence of modern life. At the outset, the Hegelian project is motivated by analysis of a tragic situation. Yet for Hegel, as for Hölderlin, this tragedy is entirely the product of the reflective philosophy of subjectivity, viz., understanding (*Verstand*). Its rejection and replacement with a different concept, namely, that of the philosophy

of reason (*Vernunft*), will release us from the tragic outlook inherent in it. What Hölderlin is really conveying through the medium of the tragic poem is, ultimately, acceptance of man's tragic situation, which one can free oneself of only via the artistic catharsis of experiencing tragedy as a work of art. Hegel will argue that a full overcoming of the tragic predicament can be achieved through the concept of reason, that is, through philosophy, which will seek, by establishing the Absolute, or rather, by establishing the possibility of conceiving the Absolute, to suppress – or to use the Hegelian technical term, sublate (*aufheben*) – the tragic predicament.⁵⁶

As in the theoretical context of the Absolute, so too in the socio-political context of civil society, tragedy is a core element. For the very establishment of civil society generates tragedy: the establishment of freedom for the individual entails the weakening of the social solidarity that gives the individual direction and purpose. Hegel maintains that this tragedy is sublated by what he characterizes as “the ethical life” (*Sittlichkeit*). It is this goal of averting the foundational tragedy, of overcoming the tragic mode of being, that impels Hegel to direct his attention to the philosophical sphere rather than the socio-political, because accepting the tragic predicament means accepting that reason is unable to overcome it. Here Hegel and Hölderlin part company. Hölderlin argues that, this being so, it is necessary to be content with lessening the weight of the tragic predicament through the artistic experience. Hölderlin is endorsing the Schillerian stance, with which we began our survey. The artistic “solution” is a kind of compensation for the Kantian impasse. Both Hölderlin and Schiller are willing to pay the Kantian price for valid knowledge. Hegel, on the other hand, seeks arguments allowing us to maintain that there are ways out of the tragic predicament, and the fate of Empedocles was by no means inevitable.

To understand Hegel's attempt to offer a philosophical alternative to the mode of existence that he, like Hölderlin, considered to be reflected in the basically pessimistic philosophy of the era, it is essential to understand his motivation for the shift from describing civil society and its pathologies⁵⁷ to describing what Hegel calls “the ethical life”. Hegel faced a challenge: he had to devise a concept of the collective public sphere that could provide, and safeguard, the same space for individual freedom that is provided by the reflective, *Verstand*-based conceptual framework of “civil society.” Hegel maintained that from the perspective of the individual, the broad space for freedom that is an inherent aspect of the concept of civil society comes at far too steep a price, and indeed, makes it impossible for the individual to live a life

worth living. To overcome this impasse, he set out the alternative of the ethical life.

It should come as no surprise to the reader that Hegel's alternative is itself susceptible to a similar critique. It is sometimes claimed that, for the individual, the realization of Hegelian "ethical life" comes at an even steeper price than that paid in the civil society framework, since ethical life overcomes the pathologies of civil society by the wholesale elimination of freedom in the public sphere. The individual dissolves, as it were, into a much larger entity, and only within that enormous aggregate does the individual grasp the meaning of her "freedom."

In arguing for his new concept – which, I want to stress, sublates that of "civil society" rather than superseding it altogether – Hegel tries to demonstrate that his concept of "ethical life" does not entail any reduction of the space for individual freedom. This in turn impels him, as we will see, to set forth a series of safeguards for this freedom, to ensure that the individual does not gain independence only by giving up his individuality in the socio-political context.

Hegel's notion of "ethical life" (*Sittlichkeit*) will be discussed in greater detail in the coming chapters, as it is the core focus of the book. I have introduced it here only to show how rewarding it can be to view this notion as a strategy for overcoming the tragic worldview expressed in "The Death of Empedocles." To a great extent, rejection of the tragic Empedoclean solution to the autonomy vs. nature dilemma defines the Hegelian project. For unless there is a path to the sought-after unity with nature that does not demand total self-sacrifice, the crucial Hegelian move, namely, relinquishing civil society as the basis for realizing one's human potential, and replacing it with the concept of "ethical life," cannot achieve the goal of protecting the individual's autonomy within the social framework that renders life meaningful. Restoration of the lost harmony without the tragic demand for total self-sacrifice constitutes the basic dialectic of dependence and independence, which defines not only the socio-political dimension of Hegel's philosophical project, but also the theoretical, namely, describing the Absolute.

Hölderlin's critique is, in effect, directed at the reflective philosophy of Kant and Fichte. In poetry and in prose, Hölderlin delineated the thematic context within which our exploration of Hegel's philosophical project will be conducted. After leaving Frankfurt for Jena, Hegel began to grapple in earnest with the theories of the era's philosophers, including not only Kant and Fichte, but Reinhold, Jacobi, and Schelling. But whereas for both Hölderlin and the Hegel of the *Early Theological Writings*, the philosophical positions popular at the time had been the

impetus for engaging in diagnosis of the era, these theories are now subjected to scrutiny for their own sake. In exploring Hegel's critique of these views, we will see that it indeed echoes the themes I have characterized as basically Hölderlinian in origin.

3 Hegel's critique of reflective philosophy in *Faith and Knowledge*

In a lecture on Hegel's concept of modernity, Habermas offers an insightful characterization of the underlying motivation for Hegel's *Faith and Knowledge*, published in 1802:

In 1802, when Hegel dealt with the systems of Kant, Jacobi, and Fichte from the standpoint of the antithesis between faith and knowledge, his aim was to burst the philosophy of subjectivity from within; nevertheless he did not proceed in a rigorously immanent fashion. He was tacitly relying on a diagnosis of the Age of Enlightenment; this alone entitled him to presuppose the absolute – that is, to pose reason (in a way different from the philosophy of reflection) as the *power of unification*.⁵⁸

Upon unpacking this characterization, we see that it contains two significant claims. The first is that Hegel's critique of reflective philosophy should not be understood solely as formal critique of its argumentation, carried out by exposing invalid inferences or erroneous premises. It is, rather, to be understood principally as critique whose objective is to expose the implications of this philosophy for the very possibility of realizing the ideal of unity. The second claim is the assumption that the Absolute is the source of disunity, which can be rectified only if the principle of unity – now identified with reason, rather than with Being, as on the Hölderlinian view – can be re-established. Indeed, this characterization is equally applicable to Hölderlin's stance, which reinforces my claim that Hegel is seeking to translate Hölderlin's existential, anti-philosophical turn into the language of conceptual philosophy, while preserving its thrust. Hegel is in essence turning away from the reflective philosophy of the subject, and embracing reflection on the concrete expressions of philosophical thought.

Careful reading of FK supports these claims. In the first part of the essay, prior to offering specific and immanent critique of each of the main reflective systems of philosophy, Hegel describes how reflective philosophy is mirrored in the broader cultural sphere. To illuminate

this mirroring, he analyzes the new meaning it has given to the classic reason–faith dichotomy. Indeed, the opening paragraph links this new meaning with the philosophy of the times:

Civilization has raised this latest era so far above the ancient antithesis of Reason and faith, of philosophy and positive religion, that this opposition of faith and knowledge has acquired quite a different sense and has now been transferred into the field of philosophy itself.⁵⁹

The new sense is a reversal of the classic account of the opposition between reason and faith, on which reason is “the handmaid of faith.” For as a result of the influence of the philosophy of subjectivity, reason not only liberated itself from its prior dependence on faith, but it is even fair to say that only within the framework of reason was the justification of faith possible. Yet this victory over faith was illusory, for in the reflective philosophies of Kant, Jacobi, and Fichte, the very possibility of actualizing reason itself becomes an object of reason’s scrutiny. Hegel contends that this returns us to a situation where:

the best that Reason could manage was to take a look at itself and come to self-awareness. Reason, having in this way become mere intellect, acknowledges its own nothingness by placing that which is better than it in a *faith outside and above* itself, as a *beyond* [to be believed in]. This is what has happened in the *philosophies of Kant, Jacobi, and Fichte*. Philosophy has made itself the handmaid of a faith once more.⁶⁰

Let me explain Hegel’s comments. The conflict between reason and faith cannot be resolved by reflection on the part of the knowing subject, since such subjective reason lacks the capacity to know the reality outside its own determinations. In essence, this limitation is structurally and conceptually identical to the limitations imposed on human knowledge by religious faith. Despite this structural affinity, however, there is also a crucial difference: reason, which is the domain of human knowledge, corresponds to the subject, and faith, which is the reality that constitutes the subject, corresponds to the object. Thus the reversal of the traditional dependence relationship between faith and reason, and between object and subject, has rendered reason, and hence, the subject herself, absolute. The prior dominance relationship, wherein faith was master, and perfectly objective, while reason was handmaid, and perfectly contingent, has been inverted, and now the subject has

sole dominion over all of reality. Hegel, a critic of contemporary society, is aware that this inversion endangers the chance of realizing the vision of a society built on equality and human solidarity. But he maintains that any attempt to hide the inversion by painting a false picture of a harmonious melding of faith and reason, object and subject, would constitute an even greater obstacle to achieving the sought-after social unity. The process whereby the subject is absolutized – turned into the ground of knowledge and thus of action, and philosophy's supreme principle – re-establishes the domination relationship between object and subject, between faith and reason. For the significance accorded to the one is based on stripping the other of any significance. A concrete expression of this dynamic, which Hegel calls "the absolute victory of reason over faith," is provided by his frequent descriptions of domination relationships and negative intersubjective relationships. The absolute subject's elevated status leads him to construe intersubjective relations as subject–object relations. The absolutized subject deems other subjects to be no more than objects whose existence is contingent on his own will, and views himself as their master. Like Hölderlin before him, Hegel concludes that the philosophy of reflection, being based, as it is, on the subject's absolute validity, is incapable of overcoming domination relations, or to put it differently, is incapable of overcoming the fundamental existential dividedness, since it is itself based on a fundamental principle of dividedness.

As we have already noted, the problem with reflective philosophy goes beyond its inability, even in principle, to overcome the deleterious pattern of faith–reason domination relationships to which it gives rise. For an even graver problem is the manner in which these domination and dependency relations are hidden by the much-trumpeted principle that the knowing subject is independent. On the classic (i.e., Cartesian–Kantian) model, domination relations between object and subject are manifest, whereas on the inverted reflective philosophy model, these relations are masked by the aforementioned principle of the autonomy of the cognizer, or indeed, of reason itself. Hegel's goal in the first part of *Faith and Knowledge* is to expose the falsity of reason's seeming independence of faith, and of the concrete parallel to this situation in the state of society. He addresses this point directly in the following passage:

The absoluteness of the finite and of empirical reality is still maintained in these philosophies [viz., those of Kant, Jacobi, and Fichte]. The infinite and the finite remain absolutely opposed. Ideality [*das Idealische*] is conceived only as the concept. And in particular, when

this concept is posited affirmatively, the only identity of the finite and infinite that remains possible is a relative identity, the domination of the concept over what appears as the real and the finite, everything beautiful and ethical being here included. And on the other hand, when the concept is posited negatively, the subjectivity of the individual is present in empirical form, and the domination is not that of the intellect but is a matter of the natural strength and weakness of the subjectivities opposed to one another.⁶¹

Hegel's critique here, which lumps together the philosophies of Kant, Jacobi, and Fichte, disregarding the very significant differences between them, must therefore be understood as external rather than immanent critique of reflective philosophy. It assumes the idea of unity – at this stage, unity in the social sphere (solidarity, community, a sense that goals are shared) – and shows that this idea, the impossibility of which Kant established, cannot, as a matter of principle, be implemented on the strength of the premises of reflective philosophy. This critique is motivated by the same objective that motivated Hölderlin's poetic project, namely, the search for a characterization of unity under which it will not simply be the limit of our capacity to know, but will be attainable. Taking the principle of unity to be an ideal the implementation of which is aspired to in both the theoretical-philosophical and the cultural-social spheres is a decisive move for Hegel. It is at this point that Hegel can be said to sever his ties to the philosophy of the reflective finite subject in general, and to Kantian philosophy in particular, both theoretically and vis-à-vis practice. From the beginning, Hegel's critique had, with minor variations, essentially amounted to the following. Every philosophical position must fulfill the criterion for "true speculative philosophy." According to Hegel, this criterion is the principle of the identity of identity and non-identity (also known as the principle of the identity of the same and the different), which is also manifested as the principle of subject-object unity. In other words, the principle that the whole is more than the sum of its parts.

For Hegel, this principle both serves as the main criterion that will be invoked in critiquing the philosophy of the era, and defines philosophy's positive mission. In FK, he expresses this as follows:

The Kantian philosophy remains entirely within the antithesis. It makes the identity of the opposites into the absolute terminus of philosophy, the pure boundary which is nothing but the negation

of philosophy. We must not, by contrast, regard it as the problem of the true philosophy to resolve at that terminus the antitheses that are met with and formulated perchance as spirit and world, or soul and body, or self and nature, etc.

On the contrary, the sole Idea that has reality and true objectivity for philosophy, is the absolute suspendedness of the antithesis. This absolute identity is not a universal subjective postulate never to be realized. It is the only authentic reality. Nor is the cognition of it a faith, that is, something beyond all knowledge; it is, rather, philosophy's sole knowledge.⁶²

In light of this unequivocal definition of the basic premise of true philosophy, there can be no doubt that the foundational premise of the Hegelian project is diametrically opposed to both the foundational premise, and the final product, of the Kantian project. This gives rise to the question of how it is possible to go on – as many interpreters of Hegel do – speaking of Hegel as continuing and completing the Kantian project. How is it possible to go on speaking of continuity when Kant's central philosophical conclusion is that the ideal of unity can be neither known nor realized, while Hegel considers the realization of this ideal to be the goal of philosophy, and explicitly denies Kantian philosophy the status of true speculative philosophy, since it is unable, even in principle, to achieve philosophy's sole goal?⁶³ It is, I believe, far more accurate to say that only by recognizing the radical paradigm shift in the way the goal of philosophy was envisaged, namely, the shift from taking the goal to be the discovery and exposition of the necessary conditions for knowledge, to taking it to be socio-cultural critique – can we really grasp the nature of the relationship between Kant's philosophy and Hegel's. Hegel's response to Kant created a new mode of philosophical discourse, a mode of discourse that refuses to differentiate theoretical considerations from practical ones.

That there is a need to even ask these questions is, to some extent, due to Hegel's deeply-held belief that the shift away from focusing on the epistemic to focusing on the historico-political could be accomplished from the inside, as it were, without necessarily relinquishing the notion of philosophy as pure thought. Hölderlin and Schiller were both well aware that the sought-after shift in the focus of philosophy would not take place without a concomitant shift in the very *concept* of philosophy. Hegel seems to have, for a short period, shared this awareness. This is manifest in the familiar first version of the fragment "Oldest System-Program for German Idealism":⁶⁴

Thus poetry achieves a higher dignity; she becomes again in the end what she was in the beginning – *teacher of humanity*; for there no longer exists any philosophy, any history; poetry alone will survive all other sciences and arts.

At the same time, we hear so frequently that the masses need a religion of the senses. Not only the masses, but the philosopher, too, is in need of it. Monotheism of reason and of the heart, polytheism of the imagination and art, those are what we need!⁶⁵

Yet in seeking to restore the philosophical project of understanding human experience to the philosophical agenda of his day by creating a mythology that would imbue philosophy with new meaning, Hegel, as I noted above, diverges from Hölderlin's path.

Hegel couches his programmatic yet revolutionary proposal in familiar philosophical terminology, perhaps out of a pragmatic desire to make it readily comprehensible. Nevertheless, he does not thereby relinquish the core element of his program, which mandates the reciprocal interdependence of the yet-to-be established new mythology and philosophy. Just as the new mythology must be philosophical, so too philosophy must turn itself into mythology. For only by being philosophical can the new mythology carry out its educational mission, and only by the reverse process, that is, by becoming mythology, can philosophy become accessible to the people.⁶⁶ This revolutionary declaration by the young Schelling, Hegel, and Hölderlin is, at this point, an assertion of the need for change in what philosophy means, and in its chief objectives. Even though, at this early stage, it is not yet clear to any of them precisely what sort of change is required, it is clear that the change will be related to philosophy's practical role rather than its theoretical role.

It is against the background of this program that Hegel's critical rejection of the reflective philosophy of subjectivity should be understood. In the eyes of the three young idealists, reflective philosophy represents the prevailing philosophy of the era, which is incapable of carrying out the mission of philosophy as articulated in their revolutionary manifesto.

This characterization of the basic motivation for Hegel's philosophy is intended to justify his external critique of the arguments put forward by the reflective philosophers of his day. This external critique is often adduced as critique of Hegel's critique of Kant,⁶⁷ but those who raise it often ignore the underlying philosophical considerations that motivate Hegel's recourse to non-immanent critique. As explained above, in resorting to non-immanent critique, Hegel is concerned about the implications of Kant's view for "the image of man" (*Bild von Menschheit*)⁶⁸

rather than about the question of whether the argument from the premises of transcendental philosophy to its conclusions is logically valid in the narrow sense. Yet Hegel himself is in a sense responsible for the aforementioned criticism of his approach, due to the vagueness of the terminology he used, especially in his early writings, in his own critique of the reflective philosophers, and also because of the way he presented his schematized history of philosophy, which focused almost entirely on epistemic issues.

4 Critique of Kant in *Faith and Knowledge*

Closer scrutiny of Hegel's critique of Kant in FK reveals how the criterion of the aforementioned external critique – namely, does the philosophy invoke the notion of the Absolute? – enables Hegel to claim that Kant's philosophy absolutizes the finite subject.⁶⁹ In upholding the thesis that there is total separation between appearance (which is absolutely dependent on the knowing subject) and reality (an objective manifold that the cognizing subject organizes into an appearance), Kant had relinquished the possibility that the Absolute is a unity of subject and object. This unity, which Hegel takes to be the goal to which philosophy aspires, is none other than the ideal unity whose concrete realization is harmony between the individual and society. Immediately after he formulates the criterion that justifies critique, which, as we noted above, also serves to define the mission of true philosophy, Hegel subjects Kant's philosophy to critique, and asserts:

But the Kantian philosophy declares this finite cognition to be all that is possible. It turns this negative, abstractly idealistic side [of cognition] into that which is in itself, into the positive. It turns just this empty concept into absolute Reason, both theoretical and practical. In so doing, it falls back into absolute finitude and subjectivity, and the whole task and content of this philosophy is, not the cognition of the Absolute, but the cognition of this subjectivity. In other words, it is a critique of the cognitive faculties.⁷⁰

Hegel clearly understood that the Kantian project is first and foremost critique of the cognitive faculty. But precisely because he grasps this point, Hegel asserts that the Kantian approach is unsuited to knowledge of the Absolute. For Hegel, and I want to stress this again, the meaning of the Absolute is not exhausted by the possibility of metaphysical knowledge, a possibility Kant rejects, but also encompasses the possibility

of the practical project of overcoming the subject–object divide in the social and political sphere. According to both Kant and Hegel, finite knowledge is the only possible knowledge. But Hegel maintains that insofar as it is the only possible knowledge, such knowledge becomes absolute. Not absolute knowledge in the sense defined by Kant's critical criterion, but, rather, absolute knowledge of the finite, that is, of that which is divided – ruptured, scattered, diverse, incomplete – and not that which is unified. Knowledge of the finite as absolute, as the horizon of human knowledge, is produced by the subject's self-reflection, which takes the finite consciousness to be the source of any object's constitutive unity. Objects are constituted in opposition to the cognizing subject's self-consciousness. Kantian philosophy's singular focus on the subjective process by which objects are constituted renders this philosophy an absolute philosophy of the finite subject that forgoes attempting to achieve true integration of the cognizing subject and counterposed object (the "thing in itself").

Hegel discerns this fundamental dividedness of the act of reflection, which Hölderlin described so acutely in "On Judgment and Being," even in what is, in essence, Kant's solution to the problem of unity, namely, in the principle of the original synthetic unity of apperception, which Hegel also identifies with the principle of the imaginative faculty.⁷¹ Hegel considered this principle to be Kant's most significant contribution to speculative philosophy, inasmuch as it is based on the notion of originary unity, in which the fundamental opposition of the component elements is bridged, yet their individual essences are preserved. In the Kantian framework, the concept of synthetic unity of apperception is not fully actualized, as the unity is only a formal identity that preserves the separation between concepts and intuitions. It is only formal because it takes the analysis of predicative sentences as the basis for a model of subject–object unity, and not simply subject–predicate unity. Hegel rejects this model, deeming it inappropriate for describing the unity of the Absolute. Hegel takes the formal identity in question to be reflective identity, that is, relative, not absolute, since it is only an external constraint on the possibility of a subject's unifying a given sensory manifold. The unification, by consciousness, of a given sensory manifold into a knowable object is possible only if the cognizing I is also aware of the originary unity of the manifold. Awareness of the originary unity is thus a precondition for unification of the manifold. For Hegel, the significance of this Kantian doctrine is that the Kantian principle of unity is relative, not absolute, or to put it differently, it is a principle of the understanding (*Verstand*) rather than a principle of Reason (*Vernunft*).

The original unity of apperception, though, according to Hegel, indeed a true unifying principle, presupposes an act of reflection on a finite unity, an act carried out by the understanding that unifies a given sensory manifold into an object of experience. The opposition between the original unity, which is a rational principle – a principle of Reason – for knowing the Absolute, and the finite unity, which is a principle of understanding (*Verstand*), renders the problem of the divide between subject and object unsolvable within the Kantian system, even though the latter recognizes the necessity of a principle of original unity:

A formal idealism which in this way sets an absolute Ego-point and its intellect on one side, and an absolute manifold, or sensation, on the other side, is a dualism. Its idealistic side – which claims for the subject certain relations, called categories – is nothing but an extension of Locke's view. The latter allows the concept and forms to be given by the object, and transfers only perceiving [*Wahrnehmen*] in general, a universal intellect, into the subject.⁷²

Hegel, like Hölderlin before him, maintains that the inadequacy that his critique has exposed is not merely a deficiency of Kant's philosophy, but rather a deficiency of any philosophy based on the self's reflection on itself. The very act of reflection presupposes separation, and hence cannot be a means of overcoming separation. This conclusion impels Hegel to search for another philosophical route, another way of bridging the chasm between subject and object.

5 Critique of Fichte in *Faith and Knowledge* and in *The Difference between Fichte's and Schelling's System of Philosophy*

Reflective philosophy's unsuitability for carrying out the central mission of philosophy, Hegel contends, was first made manifest by Kantian dualism. Fichte's attempt to overcome dualism by radicalizing reflective philosophy – it will be recalled that Fichte made the I itself into the source of the Absolute, and its self-negation the source of external objects – provided an even clearer demonstration of its unsuitability. Hegel's critique of Fichte concludes that the basic Fichtean identity, the self-identity of the Fichtean Absolute Ego, "I = I," does not satisfy the principle of identity or true unity. As Hegel puts it, Fichte makes the absolute unity of subject and object into a purely subjective unity. The Fichtean "I = I" identity-principle, he contends, expresses a spurious

absolute unity that hides behind an act of subjective self-determination, namely, the stipulation that "I = I" is also an absolute and objective determination. "The highest unity we shall find in the theory of science [*Wissenschaftslehre*]; not however, as something which is, but as something which ought to be produced through us and yet can not be."⁷³

As Hegel reads it, Fichte's claim that the unity "ought to be...yet can not be" is an arbitrary and one-sided determination on the part of the subject. It is supposed to provide a solution to the problem, which Fichte correctly identified, of the circularity of Kant's notion of pure self-consciousness. Fichte situates this problematicity in the relationship between the transcendental I and the I's awareness of the finite object. Fichte argues that the solution lies in declaring the "I = I" identity to be an absolute principle under which are subsumed both self-consciousness and consciousness of objects. Hegel, however, maintains that this purportedly absolute principle is nothing but a subjective determination that is dependent on an act of will, undermining the putative unity within which, on Fichte's view, the roles of subject and object as solely constitutive of each other dissolve. It is in fact the subject, Hegel argues, who determines the extent of the subject-object unity, thereby sustaining, albeit at a higher level, the fundamental divide between subject and object: it is sustained in the divide between the subject and the object-subject. Let me explain this further.

Hegel's critique of Fichte focuses on the Fichtean distinction between empirical consciousness and pure consciousness, and on the relationship between them. Fichte defines pure consciousness as consciousness that relates to itself through itself. It is the principle expressed in the identity "I = I." Now, how is knowledge of that which is not-I, that is, knowledge of objects, to be explained? To account for the possibility of such knowledge, Fichte assumes, as another fundamental principle, that there is also empirical consciousness, which Hegel explains as consciousness that knows itself as that which is not an object. This, then, is the second fundamental Fichtean principle. Thus far, the Fichtean account has not diverged from the Kantian: for both thinkers, there is a basic opposition between the I's relationship with itself, and the I's relationship with itself that is mediated by knowledge of objects. But whereas Kant takes this basic opposition as his starting point, assuming it as a premise of his analysis, Fichte attempts to overcome it by means of a third principle, a principle that subsumes the other two principles. The third principle is that of the identity of the I (pure self-consciousness) and the not-I (empirical consciousness). According to Hegel, however, the principle does not unite subject and object, but rather, it unites

subject (I) and something generated by a determination on the part of the subject, for that is what the object (not-I) is. Thus the unity is a unity between subject and itself, and not between subject and object. Subjectivity is the I; objectivity is the I + the not-I.

Hegel argues that while Fichte's intuitions about true speculative unity were, like Kant's, correct, his explication of true unity failed. Hegel attributed this failure to the main tool used by philosophers of subjectivity, from Descartes on, to justify their arguments, namely, the reflective approach to self-consciousness. Hölderlin's writings, and Schelling's *System of Transcendental Idealism*, published in 1800, left a deep impression on Hegel, showing that the consequences of the inadequacy of their philosophies were not limited to theory alone: the reflective approach had, he concluded, prevented them from realizing the ideal of unity even in the historico-political sphere. Hegel deems the failure of the Fichtean system particularly edifying, as it so manifestly demonstrates the impasse that results from the reflective approach. This, I contend, was a key impetus for Hegel to sever his ties with reflective philosophy and seek out an approach that would have more success at achieving the goal of knowing and realizing the Absolute, namely, unity, and its manifestation in the socio-political realm, viz., the "ethical life."

To support my thesis about the connection between Fichte's system and Hegel's rejection of reflective philosophy, I will make three claims. First, that Fichte was indeed aware of the serious difficulty that plagued the reflective approach, namely, the fact that it necessarily entailed circularity. Second, that Fichte nevertheless tried to confront the problem by pushing the reflective framework to its limits, so to speak, but was unsuccessful. And third, that this failure led Fichte away from the reflective framework to an affirmation-based framework, that is, to the primacy of practical reason (*Primat der praktischen Vernunft*).

To understand my first claim, we must return to Kant. The *Critique of Pure Reason's* chapter on the paralogisms was intended to present and resolve a difficulty arising from the concept of pure self-consciousness: the problem of consciousness reflecting on itself. Kant was well aware of the logical problem arising from the failure to distinguish, with regard to pure self-consciousness, between the reflecting I, and the object of this reflection. On the one hand, the moment the I thinks of, that is, reflects on, itself, it is not really thinking of itself, since it is thinking of itself as an object, that is, as distinct from itself. Yet on the other, in the case of self-consciousness, there is identity between the cognizing I and the object of its knowledge. The distinction between the I and the object of the I's thought, which is a necessary aspect of the process of knowing

any object, does not exist. This creates a vicious circularity: epistemology conditions the possibility of knowledge on the distinction between the act of knowing and its object, yet in self-consciousness, this distinction does not exist. Without going into detail about the solution proposed in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, let me simply note that it underscores a serious tension regarding the concept of self-consciousness, which is the basic principle of Kantian epistemology, as well as a serious tension vis-à-vis the validity of the reflective methodology as a tool for describing the relationship between consciousness and itself.

Fichte recognizes the seriousness of this difficulty posed by a key concept of the philosophy of subjectivity, but nonetheless attempts to find a solution. For unless a solution can be found, and the coherence of this foundational concept can be established, the entire edifice of reflective philosophy will collapse.

Adducing Henrich's important article "Fichte's Original Insight,"⁷⁴ we can assert that Fichte was not only the first to grasp the gravity of this problem clearly – as we just noted, Kant himself was aware of the difficulty, but thought he had resolved it – but also the first to grasp its implications for the concept of the subject. On the reflective approach, both self-consciousness, or the I, and the moral subject, become objects like any other, and the uniqueness of the human subject as autonomous and free to determine her own path is lost. The subject undergoes a process of objectification: her subjecthood is diminished, and the distinction between subject and object is effaced.

Fichte's critique differs significantly from the more recent critique of self-consciousness as reflection tendered by analytic philosophers such as Ludwig Wittgenstein, Gilbert Ryle, Ernst Tugendhat, Richard Rorty, and others. It does, however, have a close affinity with existentialist critique of the reflective approach, such as that put forward by Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Heidegger and his followers, and the postmodernists. This distinction between two kinds of critique of the reflective philosophy of subjectivity, which emerged after Hegel, was anticipated in a somewhat opaque manner in the critical writings of Hölderlin, Schelling, and the young Hegel, who combined theoretical critique of the reflective approach's circularity with moral-cultural critique of the subject's objectification. This opacity should not be construed – as the modern critics, especially those of the analytic school, tend to construe it – as resulting from a conceptual inability to clearly differentiate the theoretical dimension from the moral-cultural. Rather, it should be understood in the context of a conceptual framework within which the distinction between the natural sciences and the social sciences was still not sharp

enough to create two distinct kinds of philosophical discourse, each of which sees itself as a kind of variant mode of scientific investigation. What comes across as problematic with respect to the theory–practice distinction can, in light of the writings of the mature Hegel, be linked to the effort to achieve methodological unity of theory and praxis.

Returning now to Fichte and his claim that reflection negates the uniqueness of self-consciousness and its inherent non-objectuality, we see that this critique does not apply to reflection as a means of constituting any object other than the I. It targets only the unsuitability of reflection for describing pure self-consciousness that reflects on – turns its attention inward to – itself. In the aforementioned article, Henrich recounts in great detail Fichte's search for an alternative description of the relationship between consciousness and itself. He discusses three different attempts to formulate such an alternative, all of which reach the very impasse that motivated Fichte's search to begin with. The first, in the *Wissenschaftslehre* of 1794, is the most important with respect to Hegel's critique of Fichte's philosophy, because Hegel finds in it the selfsame problematics of reflection that this alternative is seeking to free itself of. This formulation is encapsulated by the statement: "I posit myself absolutely and unconditionally." The idea here is for the I to establish its identity for itself in a single unmediated act of self-determination, and thereby establish its relationship with itself. This contrasts with the reflective approach, on which the I is first presupposed as a starting point for the knowledge of objects, and only then is the "I know x" relationship applied to the self, without drawing the necessary distinction between the subject's knowledge of an object, and its self-knowledge. Note that in contrast to the reflective approach, in the *Wissenschaftslehre* formulation of the principle that establishes the self, there is no temporal sequence or relation; this is the import of an I that is established absolutely and independently. At the same time that I establish myself (as a subject), I establish my self-knowledge (as an object), without – or so Fichte hopes – any gap that generates vicious circularity.

This description of self-consciousness as absolute self-positing succeeds, perhaps, in overcoming the problematics of reflective definition, but only in the limited realm of self-consciousness. On Fichte's account of absolute self-positing, one can think of oneself without dissociation, hence this account does provide an answer regarding the plausibility of the Cartesian I or of Kant's constitutive unity of apperception. However, it cannot provide an answer to the problem of subject–object unity, of unity between the I and the world, between the I and

society. More generally, it cannot provide an answer to the fundamental dilemma of dualism, since unity, as absolute self-positing, is only a unity of the I-qua-subject with the I-qua-object, unity that preserves the divide between the self and objects other than the self. Fichte showed why reflection cannot provide a suitable account of the "I = I" identity, but did not explain why the same reflection cannot account for the "I = not-I" (subject-object) identity. Fichte conflates the "I = I" identity, which is described speculatively and not reflectively, with the "I = not-I" identity, which remains part of the reflective account of the pure I via the corroborating act that amounts to a declaration that this unity ought to, and must, exist.

The impasse to which the reflective approach to the explication of self-consciousness led them impelled Hölderlin, Schelling, and Hegel to claim that this approach was also unsuitable for characterizing the unity between subject and object. This had considerable import when the notion of unity was extended to the cultural and socio-political contexts. For the reflective method, the theoretical technique of making observations, inasmuch as it entails an observer and that which the observer observes, inherently generates separation and dissociation, and hence cannot serve as a means of describing how to bridge the divide between man and nature (Schelling, Hölderlin) or man and society (Schiller). The point that connects Fichte's critique of the reflective methodology, which addresses the issue of the unity and identity of self-consciousness, and his cultural critique, which is motivated by political, social, and existential concerns, is also the point over which Hegel dissociates himself from the philosophy of the reflecting subject, seeing that both Fichte's critique of it, and his proposed replacement for it, lead to a dead end. Fichte's critique rendered the problem of unity, of how to overcome the separation between subject and object, a fundamental problem of philosophy. Hegel's transformation of this problem (to which Hölderlin contributed significantly) from the theoretical problem of the unity of self-consciousness to a problem that can be characterized as existential, as the problem of alienation and dissociation, underscores the paradigm shift vis-à-vis the goal of philosophy that had occurred with the transition from Kant to Hegel. In offering an ethical-practical solution to the impasse he had reached while engaging in reflective philosophy, Fichte is the chief harbinger of this shift.

2

The First Systematic Attempt to Conceptualize the Critique of Culture

1 Introduction

Hegel's writings from the Jena period present the reader, whether student or scholar, with a complex assortment of writings that vary considerably in the degree to which they have been edited: short fragments in which Hegel sketches a plan for an article or lecture; summaries of works he has read and intends to refer to later; notes for seminars or lectures at the University of Jena; and polished works that Hegel edited and published – mainly articles that appeared in the journal he put out together with Schelling, the *Critical Journal of Philosophy*.¹ The latter, which have long been accessible to Hegel scholars, have been taken to represent Hegel's philosophical thinking during this period, but offer only a partial picture of his philosophical intentions and nascent projects. Now that the former materials have received scholarly attention, a fuller picture has begun to emerge, a picture that reveals Hegel's first attempt to construct a methodical philosophical system.

This attempt, even if not explicit, and even if it requires painstaking reconstruction from the diverse materials from this period, and was not expressly articulated in a single document, is nonetheless patently clear. The relatively late discovery of this early attempt at systematization is, of course, obviously connected to the fact that the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, published at the end of the Jena period, was perceived – rightly or not – as the culmination of Hegel's philosophical maturation in Jena, and the work that preceded it was seen as merely preparatory and thus of lesser importance. A closer look at these writings, however, reveals that the *Phenomenology* is not a systematic summary of the Hegel's work from the Jena period, but rather an expansive elaboration of only one of the issues that occupied Hegel in Jena.

Since these materials have been more widely disseminated, their diversity has enabled Hegel scholars of differing interpretive orientations to find in them putative corroboration of their respective views. They generally have not construed these materials as reflecting a consistent theoretical framework, but rather as a motley mixture of ideas from which Hegel later developed various elements of his philosophy.

A few, however, have argued that the Jena writings, taken together, constitute Hegel's first attempt to create the system that, in its mature form, would be set out in the *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences*. The *Encyclopedia's* tripartite structure is discernible in Hegel's Jena lectures: "logic or metaphysics," Hegel's term for reflection on ontology, "philosophy of nature" (reflection on the physical world), and "philosophy of spirit" (reflection on human culture). Without getting into the debate over whether the writings from the Jena period should be seen as an embryonic form of the later system, it is clear that, at the very least, upon settling in Jena, Hegel undertook – an effort that took many and varied forms over the Jena years – to anchor the central ideas that had inspired his earlier writings (from Tübingen and Frankfurt) in more rigorous argumentation.

This effort is characterized, first and foremost, by a more detached view of the subject matter of the earlier writings, namely, socio-political critique of the contemporary culture, especially the phenomena of social fragmentation and alienation. In the Jena years, Hegel tries to give this critique a scientific – what we today would call "philosophical" – orientation,² apparently deeming this to have been lacking in his earlier critique, which was mainly historical, particularly in the theological writings. In a letter written around the time he moved to Jena, Hegel apprises Schelling of this shift, emphasizing that while there was a need for different argumentation, the motivating rationale for the earlier works had not been supplanted:

In my scientific education, which began with the endeavor to satisfy humbler wants, I have been driven onward to philosophy, and the ideal of youth has thus, of necessity, had to take on the form of reflection, and transform itself into a system. Now, while I am still employed with this task, I begin to ask myself where I can find a point of contact to bring my thoughts to bear upon human life.³

The change Hegel is advocating – a change in how he will approach the problem he seeks to confront – that of overcoming separation while maintaining individual autonomy – is highly significant, not only in

and of itself, but because it renders the attempt to identify thematic continuities between the early and later writings far more complex. For in the Jena writings, the themes of alienation and the overcoming of separation are no longer explicit, as they were in the earlier works, but only implied, and only come to light in the process of interpretive explication of the texts in question. Apart from this “technical” difficulty, the change from a pragmatic–historical to a systemic–philosophical mode of presentation gives rise to new challenges that Hegel did not have to address when his approach was mainly pragmatic.

One of these foundational questions has to do with the relation between philosophical reflection and its object. In reflecting, is an object merely characterized, or does reflection seek to reveal the necessary conditions for the existence of its object? The pre-Jena Hegel felt that the systematic efforts of Kant, Fichte, and to a certain degree Schelling, had more or less succeeded in providing a justification, within the framework of the reflective philosophy of subjectivity, for the principle of autonomy, and the pressing problem was its political–cultural implementation. But in the course of trying to contemplate the socio-cultural situation that would constitute realization of the principle of autonomy, Hegel experienced growing dissatisfaction with the reflective–philosophical modes of justification invoked by the Kantian–Fichtean approach.

Ultimately, he concluded that the crisis of alienation he had described in *The Difference between Fichte's and Schelling's System of Philosophy* was simply a concrete expression of the dualism represented by the reflective structure of the Kantian–Fichtean approach. Having reached this conclusion, it was clear to Hegel that the possibility of upholding a position that distinguished between the philosophical–reflective sphere, and the sphere of praxis, was no longer open to him. On the one hand, he had to eschew the theory–praxis dualism of reflective philosophy, but on the other, he could not relinquish provision of an independent justification of the theoretical via the practical, that is, he could neither leave the theoretical as pure theory, nor reduce the theoretical to the practical by making its justification totally dependent on the practical. This important double constraint, as it were, motivates Hegel's philosophical endeavor, which never abandoned the practical thematics of overcoming alienation, but refused to make due with just a prescriptive analysis in political terms, suggesting solutions that fell strictly within the socio-political sphere addressed by his political writings, e.g., his *German Constitution*. In the Jena period, Hegel's ongoing dialectical oscillation between theoretical examination and advocacy of political praxis favored the theoretical pole. Only toward the end of the Jena period was

Hegel able to balance and integrate the two perspectives, a step that is manifest in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*.

In his studies of the development of Hegel's thinking over the Jena period, Kimmerle argues that Hegel's attempts to build a philosophical system⁴ ultimately led to an irreconcilable conceptual tension between two opposed motivations. On the one hand, Hegel sought a philosophical conceptualization that was a self-contained and self-reflective totality, a theory in the Aristotelian sense of thought thinking itself. There can be no room in such a system, it would seem, for concrete political action that seeks to change the existing socio-political structure. Yet notwithstanding this rather grandiose aim, the starting point of Hegel's philosophy remained the attempt to overcome duality and separation in the political-cultural realm. There was, therefore – so Kimmerle argues – a fundamental tension between these two motivations, one of which would have to be relinquished. In other words, according to Kimmerle, Hegel must choose between devising a reformist cultural-political program, that is, between serving as a politically-involved social critic – and devising a closed philosophical system, which would render him an external observer who relates to socio-political events solely by reflection.

Kimmerle does not claim that in Jena Hegel abandoned his engagement in critique of contemporary culture, but rather, that this critique was confined to a closed philosophical system. But Kimmerle maintains that this ipso facto undercuts Hegel's critical engagement, since cultural-political critique, upon being absorbed into a purely theoretical system, loses its bite, as it is no longer directed toward actual events, but is simply an aspect of thought's thinking about itself. Kimmerle concludes that even if critique of contemporary culture remains a central element of Hegel's thinking in the Jena period, it is doomed to be ineffectual, since the transition from discussing the political in direct and concrete terms to discussing it as part of a closed and highly abstract system creates an unbridgeable gap between acting in the world and thinking about the world.⁵

I have discussed Kimmerle's view at length because, if correct, it undermines my basic claim that in the Jena writings, and in general, Hegel is proposing a fundamental transformation of the meaning of philosophy, which – as we saw in the previous chapter – had until this point in the history of philosophy been understood as a kind of self-reflection. If Kimmerle is right, upon moving to Jena, Hegel abandons the proposed transformation and returns to the traditional model, so that if it is at all warranted to speak of Hegel's espousing a changed conception of

philosophy, this is only true of the pre-Jena writings. Kimmerle's account limits the possibility of systematizing philosophy's critical component to theory in the traditional sense, whereas on my reading, Hegel seeks to go beyond that limited understanding of theory.

Kimmerle ignores the fact that Hegel is well aware that the critical element he wishes to retain is inconsistent with the traditional conception of theory or systematization, and aware that he must *redefine the notion of theory* so that it can incorporate this critical dimension. Indeed, what Hegel is trying to do, in large measure, is to extricate himself from the paralyzing theory–praxis dichotomy that Kimmerle seeks to force on him by invoking the “closed system” argument. On this conception, Hegel can either be engaged in theory-making, that is, devising a closed system that has no unmediated impact on reality, or can be actively engaged, as a political or social leader, in bringing about the change he deems desirable; he cannot do both.

Hegel attempts to extricate himself from this dilemma by connecting its horns. On his view, there is no way to validate the impulse to critique contemporary culture without anchoring this critique in a philosophical system, just as there can be no theoretical account, regardless of its subject, that is not embedded in a concrete context.⁶ Hegel's insistence on merging theoretical systematization with specific political or social critique is also evident from the alternatives – attempts to create a context-free systematization of human life – alluded to in the “Oldest System-Program for German Idealism,” which Hegel wrote together with Hölderlin and Schelling.⁷ Moreover, as we saw in Chapter 1, Hegel ultimately rejects efforts, such as Schiller's, to eschew systematization and instead seek unmediated descriptions of human existence such as those offered by the arts and by religion.

I have raised the issue of Hegel's concepts of “system” and “theory” to emphasize that in the Jena period Hegel explores the problem of alienation and fragmentation in a new context, namely, that of the search for a systemic-philosophical underpinning for the critical impulse. As a result, he arrives at new ways of presenting the problem. His first attempt at translating ethical–political critique into philosophical terms can be seen in the two works on which this chapter will focus, the *System of Ethical Life* (SEL) and *On the Scientific Ways of Treating Natural Law, on its Place in Practical Philosophy, and its Relation to the Positive Sciences of Right*.⁸

In discussing SEL, we will see how Hegel uses Schelling's terminology of levels (*potenzen*), along with the Kantian notions of “concepts” and “intuitions,” in expounding the ethical–political ideals embodied in the

idea of ethical life. The same attempt is made, albeit somewhat more critically, in the first two sections of the *Essay on Natural Law* (NL), which are solely devoted to critique of the methodological tools used by both empiricist and transcendental philosophy. Hegel argues that these tools are not suitable for presenting and justifying the Absolute, which in this essay he deems equivalent to the ideal of ethical life.

It is not simply because both these works illustrate Hegel's effort to systematize the underlying motivations for his philosophical project as a whole that I explore them conjointly in this chapter. I also do so to highlight a crucial difference between two understandings of freedom that follow from the ideal of ethical life. In NL, this concept has Romantic features that emphasize the interdependence of achieving freedom, on the one hand, and on the other, carrying out courageous acts of heroism. For only defiance in the face of possible death in battle generates a decisive break with the impediments to actualization of freedom as absolute independence. In SEL, the concept of freedom differs significantly, reflecting Hegel's dissatisfaction with the heroic solution. It is transformed into the struggle to arrive at a positive conceptual structure that can explain the transition from a form of social organization that does not preserve individual autonomy to one where the individual is fully aware of his separateness. As envisaged on this non-Romantic model, the struggle loses its particularistic nature, and freedom is no longer dependent on the individual's strength of character, but is generalized. It is now construed as a function of social parameters such as property, crime, and punishment, combined with conditions that foster self-awareness through the struggle for respect and mutual recognition.

The positive formulation that Hegel puts forward in SEL is more refined and complex, and closer to the more mature account in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* and *Philosophy of Right*, yet its critical force is far weaker than that of NL. So as not to lose sight of this critique, and to offer a comprehensive account of Hegel's overall argument, I will discuss SEL and NL together, anchoring the positive SEL solution to the problem (of sustaining individual autonomy in the social context that gives life meaning) in Hegel's critique of the philosophical understandings of natural law from which various societal arrangements are derived. These understandings are discussed in NL. Hegel rejects the proposed regimes on the strength of the harmonious ideal of ethical life, which he presents and argues for in SEL.

Hegel ultimately drops the terminology used in these works, preferring the terminology of the philosophy of subjectivity and the notion of "Spirit" (*Geist*), which becomes the central concept in his lectures

on what he calls “Realphilosophie,” given in 1803–1804 and again in 1805–1806. These lectures are explored in the following chapters. This terminological shift underscores my contention that the Jena period is one in which Hegel is engaged in searching for the right means of articulating and systematizing his primary philosophical program – revealing and overcoming the individual’s existential separation, an objective he by no means set aside upon moving to Jena.⁹

2 Natural ethics: *The System of Ethical Life* (SEL)

One of Hegel’s early Jena writings, which was discovered and published only in the twentieth century, was given the title *The System of Ethical Life* (SEL) (*System der Sittlichkeit*). It is usually understood as a kind of preliminary sketch of what would ultimately become the full version of Hegel’s central work on political philosophy, *The Philosophy of Right*. This claim is based on the fact that while SEL seems to be trying to describe the emergence of the desirable form of social organization, it is quite vague, and some places are so obscure as to be almost incomprehensible. In this early version, it is argued, Hegel does not call the social entity in question “the state,” but rather, “absolute ethical life,” and conceives of it as sublating (*aufheben*) the preceding, inadequate forms of social organization, especially that of “civil society” organized around the satisfaction of needs. Even if this is correct in some sense, it is, I would argue, more plausible to read SEL differently, to read it, not as a new project, but as the continuation of Hegel’s attempts to come to grips with the question he addressed in his theological writings.

But despite this thematic continuity, in SEL there is, as we will see, a shift in the sort of argumentation Hegel has recourse to both in presenting the problem, and in sketching its solution. Instead of the historical analogies and interpretations of scriptural texts, he now uses more philosophical terminology taken from Kant, though modified somewhat in response to Schelling’s critique. The new mode of argumentation is directed toward the same question of the relationship between the societal and the individual, between heteronomy and autonomy, but that relationship is now understood in epistemic terms, specifically, in terms of intuitions and concepts. The subsumption relations between intuitions (the Kantian term for sensory manifolds) and concepts (which unite sensory manifolds into objects of thought) are explored to gauge their suitability for describing relationships in the social context.

Construing Hegel’s choice of terminology as merely stylistic, as some scholars have, would close the gap between the early theological works

and the Jena writings, but the difference in terminology is in fact significant, as the Introduction to SEL indicates. The philosophical terminology serves to tighten the bond between being knowable and being given to concrete realization, that is, between theory and praxis. Hegel opens with the following statement:

Knowledge of the Idea of the absolute ethical order depends entirely on the establishment of perfect adequacy [equivalence – P.I.] between intuition and concept, because the Idea itself is nothing other than the identity of the two. But if this identity is to be actually known, it must be thought as a made adequacy [i.e., manufactured equivalence – P.I.]. But because they are then held apart from one another in an equation [as its two sides], they are afflicted with a difference. One side has the form of universality, the other the opposed form of particularity. Therefore, in order that the equation be completely established, what [was] first [put] in the form of particularity [must] be put in the form of universality, while what [was] given the form of universality must now be given the form of particularity.¹⁰

Hegel's argumentation is quite abstruse. We must bear in mind that, as I noted, Hegel, dissatisfied with the theological framework he had adopted in his early writings, is now trying out another path. He seeks to translate his socio-political ideas into philosophical terms, to "encode" them, as it were, in logical-metaphysical language. Despite its difficulty, SEL provides a window onto Hegel's search for a suitable format for his thought.

Hegel opens SEL with two important assertions. The first posits a deep dependence between knowledge of the absolute ethical order and the possibility of actualizing the notion of identity, that is, the possibility of connecting concepts, which are universal, with intuitions, which are particular. This entails subsuming them under each other, rather than reducing one sphere to the other: Hegel maintains that it is impossible to reduce the universal to the particular, or the particular to the universal. The second assertion indicates the manner in which actualization of the identity between these elements might be achieved, namely, by inverting the perspective through which that identity is first examined. In itself, this inversion does not restore the initial unified and harmonious state, which was broken up. The goal is to somehow reconstruct that primal unity by means of subsumption. Subsumption, as, for instance, when the universal principle subsumes the particular, creates a degree of identity, but the opposition between the incompatible elements persists.

Upon inversion, that is, subsumption in the other direction, the incompatible elements are still preserved, but in a “merged” form, so that there is no longer opposition.

These two claims, namely, that knowledge of the absolute ethical order requires actualization of the identity principle; and, that our perspective must be inverted (i.e., we must consider the universal from the perspective of the particular, and vice versa), will guide the phenomenological description of the creation of an absolutely ethical society. The first, which is formulated as a goal, also serves as a criterion for assessing interim states. This criterion enables us to determine whether a given state of affairs merely seems to be ethical, or can indeed be recognized as such. The dynamic that will guide the transition from one conceivable form of social organization, for instance, that which Hegel calls “natural ethical life,” to the next, “absolute ethical life,” is impelled by failure to satisfy this epistemic criterion. For according to this criterion, if the natural state represents an absolutely ethical order, it must, in principle, be knowable. Since it is not knowable, it must be replaced by another. At this point, in the third part of SEL, Hegel asserts:

But at none [of the previous levels] does absolute nature occur in a spiritual shape; and for this reason it is also not present as ethical life; not even the family, far less still the subordinate levels, least of all the negative, is ethical. Ethical life must be the absolute identity of intelligence, [i.e., that which is intelligible] with complete annihilation of the particularity and relative identity which is all that the natural relation is capable of; or the absolute identity of nature must be taken up into the unity of the absolute concept.¹¹

The second principle serves as a methodological principle that guides the phenomenological description of the creation of an absolutely ethical society. Whenever we seem to have a description that meets the epistemic criterion, we have to go back and invert the roles of the elements of the identity, and check whether, even on the inverted description, the identity is preserved, or whether, upon performing the inversion, we see that the purported identity actually entailed conditionality, whereby one side of the equation was dominant. The inversion principle, according to which the particular should also be viewed as universal, and the universal, as particular, is intended – along with the epistemic principle – to guarantee the knowledge and actualization of a social order that is free of domination relations, a social order where no component takes primacy over any other.

Hegel transitions from his short exposition of the theoretical principles intended to serve as a framework for discussion of the praxis of ethical life, to the latter discussion, without providing any sort of justification for the transition.¹² The transition is made in a single sentence that implies that the relationship between a people and the individuals of which it is comprised corresponds to a specific relationship between intuitions and concepts: "The intuition of this totality is an absolute people, while its concept is the absolute oneness of the individuals."¹³

The problem of the reciprocal dependence between a given sensory manifold and a concept that unifies it is thus transferred to the socio-political sphere, where the relationship between the individual and the society she is a part of is explored. This exploration constitutes part of the phenomenological description of the process of establishing an absolutely ethical society, which becomes necessary upon dialectic rejection of the "natural" ethical society. This first negation, negation of the natural ethical society, which is presented in the second part of SEL ("The Negative or Freedom or Transgression"), is absolute. But in the third part ("Ethical Life"), Hegel revisits and rejects that starting point, namely, "natural" ethical society; this time, his rejection is positive, that is, it is carried out by incorporating the rejected premise – that natural, unmediated ethical life is possible – and not simply rejecting it, as in the first negation.

Hegel thus begins the process of constituting an absolutely ethical society, taking natural ethics as his starting point.¹⁴ At the outset, this natural ethical system is based entirely on the principle of individuality: the individual enjoys full and exclusive self-determination, and is completely occupied with his unmediated feelings. Since, however, her existence in this state is nonetheless ethical, and since, as I will soon explain, the import of ethical life is a renewed sublation of difference, the individual's existence presupposes the very thing whose renewed sublation is constitutive of him as an ethical individual:

The first level is natural ethical life as *intuition* – the complete undifferentiatedness of ethical life....But the ethical is inherently by its own essence a resumption of difference into itself [i.e., restoration of undifferentiatedness – P.I.]...identity rises out of difference and is essentially negative; its being this presupposes the existence of what it cancels. Thus this ethical nature is also an unveiling, an emergence of the universal in face of the particular, but in such a way that this emergence is itself wholly something particular – the identical.... This

intuition, wholly immersed in the singular, is *feeling*, and we will call this the level of *practice*.¹⁵

What this passage is saying is that even in the most primitive ethical situation, where no distinctions have been drawn, the individual must assume the existence of that which is other – another individual – since the essence of the ethical is the act of sublating difference. For ethics requires interaction with another. It is through “otherness” that we understand our existence as separate, and through this awareness of separateness that we grasp a “moment” – a stage, complete for its own time, in the development of the Absolute. Even the most rudimentary form of social existence thus enables the individual to discover the universal, in some incipient way, in the natural, although this universality goes almost completely unnoticed, since at this stage the individual interacts with nature mainly in order to satisfy her needs.

As the end of the quoted passage informs us, action that targets nature for the purpose of satisfying needs impedes recognition of universality, hence at this point in Hegel’s argument, the individual’s confrontation with the world is not theoretical, but concrete. This clarifies Hegel’s description of the first stage (that of natural ethics) as “the subsumption of concept under intuition”: the initial confrontation with the world is not conceptual, which would require a distancing from objects, but rather *engagement with objects*. In essence, this confrontation makes concepts subject to our actions, and thus precludes the possibility of uncovering concepts within any experience that is not strictly object-oriented. Need, which is a primal impulse, is also the first stage of unconscious knowledge of the separateness of subject and object.

The first overcoming of this separation takes place at this stage, when concepts are subsumed under intuitions, by “destroying” the object in the paradigmatic act of satisfying the feeling of hunger by the act of eating. Hegel calls this stage of assimilating or absorbing the object “enjoyment,” describing it as follows:

This enjoyment in which the object is determined purely ideally, and entirely annihilated, is purely sensuous enjoyment; i.e., the satiation which is the restoration of the indifference and emptiness of the individual or of his bare possibility of being ethical or rational. The enjoyment is purely negative because it pertains to the individual’s absolute singularity and therefore involves the annihilation of the object and the universal.¹⁶

By destroying the object, the act of enjoyment overcomes the gap initially delineated by need: it *overcomes* separation. But it also makes a

dialectical contribution to the process of becoming *aware* of one's separateness, which is not conscious at the stage of need. For in addition to satisfying the need that provoked it, the act of enjoyment enables the individual to grasp her enjoyment as *her* experience:

But it [the enjoyment – P.I.] remains essentially practical and is distinguished from absolute self-feeling by reason of the fact that it proceeds from difference and to that extent involves a consciousness of the objectivity of the object.¹⁷

The outcome of satisfying a need, namely, the subject's consciousness of her separateness, paves the way for the transition to the next stage, that of consciousness, where the notion of "labor" is first introduced. Labor as an activity presupposes consciousness of the separateness of objects, or the concept of objectuality. For awareness of an object's separateness generates the idea that it is possible to act on an object quite apart from the satisfaction of immediate needs. The separateness is also a condition for generation of a very primitive concept of property – at this stage, not property in the social sense of mutual recognition that this thing belongs to me, but only in the sense of an individual's ability to recognize the existence of something beyond the extreme individualism of the unmediated act of satisfying a need. For labor creates something the need for which is not felt immediately, but emerges over time.

Recall our characterization of need as absolute particularity which represses and hides the universal. Revelation of the universal, the concept, begins with the act of labor. Labor is the first concrete embodiment of the separateness that was exposed at the end of the first stage, that of need. Initially this embodiment is purely negative, since labor is no more than our engagement with an object, and has no autonomous existence. The first positive embodiment of the separateness that labor brings to light is the *possession* of property. Revelation of the universal from within the initial particularity is completed upon the emergence of the concept of the tool, which unites the negative aspect of labor as engagement with objects, and the positive aspect, which is embodied in possession, a product of labor. The tool is the first union of object and subject, and the first complete revelation of the universal-particular, the first appearance of the embodiment of the Absolute:

In the tool the subject makes a middle term between himself and the object, and this middle term is the real rationality of labour. ... In the tool the subjectivity of labour is raised to something universal. Anyone can make a similar tool and work with it. To this extent the tool is the persistent norm of labour.¹⁸

The process of the emergence of consciousness of separateness, which Hegel describes by invoking the invention of tools following the initial experience of need, takes two additional forms: the birth of children, and the creation of speech.¹⁹ I will not describe these versions of the process here,²⁰ both because they are structurally similar to that of the invention of tools, and due to the vagueness of Hegel's account of them, which is far more pronounced than in his explanations of labor, possession, and tools. The important point is where Hegel is going with his phenomenological description of this process of becoming distanced from the immediacy of natural existence. Its goal is establishment of the individual as a self-standing entity, direct satisfaction of whose natural existential needs is superseded by the need to cooperate with other individuals in order to satisfy those needs. This in turn creates networks of non-natural and non-primal ties that present new problems for the individual, who has lost the ability to directly sustain her existence. The central problem confronting the individual is thus reconstruction – in the social context within which she now functions independently – of the natural primal immediacy. Toward the end of his description of the first level of natural ethics (“Feeling as Subsumption of Concept under Intuition”), Hegel describes some of the said non-natural networks, which he still considers part of “natural” ethical life.

Moving to the second level, that of “Infinity and Ideality in Form or in Relation,” as Hegel entitles it, the terms “infinite” and “ideal” characterize the universal and unlimited conceptual nature of this level, in contradistinction to the natural particularity of the preceding level. As we saw, the first level, he argues, generates glimpses of the universal concealed behind the veil of the particular. The second level will do precisely the opposite, namely, assume the complete absence of the particular, and present the universal as independent and self-standing, or at any rate, utterly unaffected by the existence of the particular:

[The second level – P.I.] is the subsumption of intuition under the concept, or the emergence of the ideal and the determining of the particular or the singular by the ideal....Just as the single individual was dominant at the first level so the universal is dominant here. At the first level the universal was hidden, something inner, and speech itself was considered there only as something singular, i.e., in its abstraction.²¹

The concepts that, at the previous level, were associated with individualism, now – under the inverted description – become fully universal, losing these particularistic senses. Possessions are now understood as *property*, that is, something to which the possessor has a legal right. Labor, previously the individual's lone engagement with an object, is now divided among several individuals who create the object together. This generates a division of labor, and in so doing universalizes labor: labor is no longer the toil of a specific individual on a specific object, but rather a generalized component of more amorphous undertakings. Hegel offers a similar description of the transition from tool use as a primitive expression of universality resulting from the “distancing” process described above, whereby the individual was increasingly distanced from her concrete needs, to development of the machine as a generalizing force that completely suppresses individuality and particularity.

Machines destroy the connection to one's individuality that the tool, despite its universal character, retained via the concrete individual who employed it. Hegel does not provide a satisfying explanation of this process of the universalization of labor and tools. What necessitated the transition from satisfaction of needs on a particular, i.e., individual, basis, to universalized satisfaction of needs?²² The process is, in effect, a precondition for the transition from possessing something to owning property.

Let us explore the connection between the two processes – the transition from particular to universalized need-satisfaction, and the transition from possession to ownership. The former, viz., the universalization of labor and tools, creates a production surplus. This surplus changes the meaning of possession, which until now was construed as the individual's possession of something required to satisfy his needs, even those that were not immediate:

Thus this possession [i.e., possession of the excess product of his labour – P.I.] has lost its meaning for the practical feeling of the subject and is no longer a need of his, but a *surplus*; its bearing on use is therefore a universal one and, this universality being conceived in its reality, the bearing is on the use of others.²³

The surplus that had been created was an objective condition allowing for the advent of property. But joint labor was the fundamental underlying condition that enabled the transition from possessions to

property, as it fostered awareness of that which was the individual's, and that which was the group's. That is, it fostered recognition that the object in my possession is mine; that I have a legal right to it. Together, the surplus and joint labor generate the concept of property:

The subject is [not] simply determined as a possessor, but is taken up into the form of universality; he is a single individual with a bearing on others and universally negative as a possessor recognised as such by others. For recognition is singular being, it is negation, in such a way that it remains fixed as such (though ideally) in others, in short the abstraction of ideality, not ideality in the others. In this respect possession is *property*; but the abstraction of universality in property is *legal right*.²⁴

Even though Hegel characterizes the notion of the legal right to property as an abstraction, it is interesting that it emerges at this early stage. For on his account, property as a right is instituted even before establishment of the socio-political order. Property makes its first appearance at the stage of natural ethics, immediately after the individual's liberation from the need to focus solely on sustenance. This highlights the difference between Hegel's view and social contract views, which see property as viable only after the establishment of a sovereign power that can enforce acquisition rights. And indeed, Hegel must confront the question of what substance there can be to a right to property that is not backed by a means of enforcement. Is this not precisely the point at which the need for a social contract emerges? Hegel, however, argues that the stage of natural ethics is pre-political, its social relationships being anchored in nature. The clearest example of such a relationship is the family. Since it is a natural system, the family imposes cooperation and codes of conduct that regulate both its internal relations and its relations with other families. An extended period of development will ultimately mold these relations into the sort of non-natural, rational social order postulated by the social contract theorists. This type of rational social order is not altogether different from natural ethics, but rather, inevitably ensues from the latter's development and increasing universalization.

Hegel's response to the question, so central to the social contract approach, of whether the notion of the right to property presupposes a political order, reflects the fact that he does *not* take the fundamental socio-political question to be that of the source of the collective's authority to impose its will on individuals. According to Hegel,

individuals, reflecting on how to protect their physical safety and property, agree to transfer to the sovereign their power to protect these interests. The framework that enables individuals to act cooperatively is Hegel's primary focus, at least during the Jena period. When this question is posed, that of the source of the authority relinquished to the sovereign for the purpose of preserving individual rights loses its centrality. For individuals are inherently connected to one another. The individual's awareness of her influence on her peers, and vice versa, is an integral part of her existence, indeed, of the basic human experience. The fact that others have the capacity to safeguard or thwart one's acquisitions is simply a feature of that experience. While it may vary in degree, this cooperation is a constitutive aspect of what it means to be an individual. Hegel views social institutions such as work, property, and exchange, which require significant cooperation between individuals, not as discontinuous with the individual's elemental human experience, but as part of it.

The manner in which the individual cooperates with his fellows – and not the individual in and of herself – is Hegel's starting point. Social contract theories assume that cooperation can only be instituted on the basis of relinquishing something. Hegel, on the other hand, takes cooperation to be an immanent aspect of individual existence. Here, in *The System of Ethical Life* (SEL), as in his other major works, he takes cooperation with others to be constitutive of subjectivity, of the individual's recognition of her autonomous existence, her separateness within the web of natural social relations she finds herself in. In his social writings, especially *The Philosophy of Right*, Hegel addresses the question of how the individual's separateness gives rise to the institution of the person, viz., the individual with legal rights; he is far less interested in the question of why people form associations. People indeed group together, but at the same time seek to express themselves as individuals in ways that do not undermine or interfere with their social ties. For Hegel, paradoxically, this "inherent cooperativeness" construal of the social contract nonetheless preserves, in a different form, radical separation which must be countered by emphasizing the social aspects of human life. At the earlier stages of human development, separateness was a perpetual threat to survival, and though the individual later exchanges her natural separateness for a separateness that is less anxiety-laden, she makes no real attempt to overcome it.

To understand the next level of Hegel's progression, that of the person, the individual with legal rights, and in fact to better understand the preceding level, we have to return to the distinction, made at the

beginning of SEL, between concepts and intuitions, and the subsumption relations between them. Hegel presents the first stage of the second level, where manifestations of the universal that had been veiled by the particular – the division of labor, machines, and property – are revealed, as the subsumption of intuitions under concepts. In other words, the general is dominant over the particular. To complete the analysis of this stage of the second level, Hegel must now perform an inversion, adopting the opposite perspective and exposing the particular that dominates the general. The inverted description does not present the newly-revealed concepts as emerging in the reverse direction, but rather discloses the conceptual framework that is generated by the inversion. Specifically, the concepts of “exchange,” “value,” and “contract,” which Hegel presents as manifesting the subsumption of concepts under intuitions, can be so presented because they emerge from concrete practical acts of individuals. Hegel articulates the principal difference between the two directions in explaining the distinction between the ideal and the real: the reality of concepts subsuming particulars is an ideal reality, whereas in the opposite direction, that is, upon inversion, these concepts are actualized. The legal right to property, which is an abstraction of the recognition on the part of others that this thing belongs to me, is concretely actualized in the act of trade or exchange. When we engage in trade,²⁵ this is the actualization, as opposed to the idealized form, of the right to property.

Each of these [beings with surplus goods and unsatisfied needs – P.I.] enters upon the transformation of the individual thing with which he is linked ideally and objectively [as its legal owner] into something that is subjectively linked with his need. This is *exchange*, the realization of the ideal relation. Property enters reality through the plurality of persons involved in exchange and mutually recognizing one another.²⁶

The two opposed directions – from general to particular and vice versa – disclose two distinct conceptual frameworks, one general, the other particular. The division of labor, machines, and property are object-dependent, whereas trade, value, and contract reflect relationships between individuals. Both the former (i.e., division of labor, machines, and property) and the latter (trade, value, and contract) express relationships between the general and the particular: in the former, the subject doing work, using a machine, or acquiring property, represents the particular, and the division of labor, the machine, and property, the

general, whereas in the latter, the subject engaging in trade represents the particular, and value and contract represent the general. The specific act of exchange is, therefore, not only an actualization of the ideal right to property, but also the particular negation of this right: in engaging in a concrete act of exchange, each side exchanges something in her possession for something in someone else's possession, thereby both actualizing her ideal right to property (by gaining the latter object), and executing a particular negation of this right (by relinquishing the former object).

Just as, at the previous stage, the tool is both a means of mediating between need and labor, and also the first concrete expression of the unity of the particular and the universal, so too at the present stage, actual particular acts of exchange are the universal concretization of the right to property. This concretization is expressed in "contract," which anchors exchange, along with the right to property, in a single totality – an actual act of exchange – that particularizes the right to property while universalizing the act of exchange.

The transition to the third stage of SEL's "Second Level" – "(c) The Level of the Indifference of (a) and (b)" – is tantamount to the transition from discussing the act of exchange, and its universalization in contract, to discussing the concrete individuals who engage in trade and enter into commercial contracts with each other. Hegel seems to adopt the implicit premise that the emergence of the social institutions of exchange and contract is accompanied by a significant change in the concept of the individual.²⁷ Establishment of these institutions ushers in the concept of the "person," explicated by Hegel as the individual sans any specific characterization. Up to this point, the individual had a concrete characterization that reflected a specific reality: he knew himself through an object, by using a specific tool to engage in a specific labor. But now the concept of the individual becomes completely abstract, being anchored in the law's universality. Here too, Hegel formulates the distinction theoretically, in terms of the relationship between the general and the particular, or the corresponding relationship between intuitions and concepts. The totality – that is, the coalescence of the act of exchange and the right to property – whose universalized expression is the contract, also has a particularized expression, namely, the new, "bare" concept of the "person":

But the intuition of this totality, yet of this totality as singularity, is the individual as the indifference of all specific characteristics, and this is how he displays his individuality as totality.²⁸

In the continuation, Hegel defines the "person" as follows:

As what is absolutely formal, life is for this very reason absolute subjectivity or the absolute concept, and the individual, considered under this absolute abstraction, is the *person*.²⁹

The acts of cooperation, in the context of the various social frameworks, that brought about the neutralization of the individual's unique traits and their unique modes of self-expression, and gave rise to the "person," also had another effect: persons, though not connected, recognize one another, an awareness that ensues from cooperating within the said social frameworks. Unlike the familiarity that arises among individuals on the basis of their separateness and unique traits, this consciousness is awareness of the other *as one's opposite*, which follows from characterization of the person as, in the context of her self-presentation in encounters with others, radically *indifferent* to these others.

Exiting this situation of mutual formal acknowledgement of the other that is devoid of any real connection to that person, because it is actually a relationship with the self, is, once again, achieved by changing the perspective from which we view the relationship in question (recognition). The perspective that produced this formal view of acquaintance subsumed the particular (intuitions) under the universal (concepts). Now, upon inversion, the differences which, from that perspective (subsumption of the particular under the universal), did not seem to exist, come back into view.³⁰ Hegel calls one such difference "inequality in power of life" (*Ungleichheit der Macht des Lebens*), i.e., natural inequality. This disparity regenerates the sort of hierarchical relationships that seemed to have been eliminated by taking the individual to be a "person" abstracted from any identifying characteristics, and indifferent, in her self-presentation, to any influence by others. The disparity in life-power is expressed in hierarchical intersubjective relations, and specifically, the lord–bondsperson relationship.³¹

As a natural relationship, the lord–bondsperson relationship is a reflection of two facts that Hegel takes to be manifest: natural human differentiation, and interaction between individuals. The ensuing unequal relationship is, however, a necessary precondition for natural ethical relations. Natural lordship–bondage relations are structurally similar to lordship–bondage relations between ethical norms and individual actions. But this identity, Hegel claims, is only formal, inasmuch as with respect to natural lordship–bondage relations, the source of the authority to demand obedience is particular and arises from the concrete situation

of being dominated by a lord, whereas in the case of ethical norms, the source of the norm's authority is universal.

Formally this [moral] relation is the same [as the natural one]; the difference consists in the fact that in ethical lordship [i.e., the law – P.I.] and obedience the power or might is at the same time something absolutely universal, whereas here it is only something particular; in ethical lordship individuality is only something external and the form; here it is the essence of the relation and on this account there is here a relation of bondage, since bondage is obedience to the single individual and the particular.³²

What I find intriguing and important about this comparison between the *natural* lordship–bondage relation, and the ethical norm–particular action relation, is the derivation of the justification for subjecting oneself to ethical norms from naturally-occurring inequality. Though natural inequality is a particular situation, it leads to the initial discovery of the possibility of the givenness of a universal domination relation that serves as the foundation for “ethical lordship” both in the natural form in which it first appears, and in its later, absolute form. It should be noted that the domination relation present at this stage of human development is distinct from the domination relation that anchors the institution of slavery that took root later in human history. The latter, particularly the institutionalized slavery of the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries, invoked a purportedly universal moral argument to justify the institution of slavery, the former should be understood as an early natural source of the inequality that spawned the concept of bondage.

Following his discussion of lordship–bondage, Hegel concludes the first part of SEL with a discussion of the family. It is intended to reconcile the two incompatible ways of describing the individual that have come to light thus far. For whereas on the one hand, the individual is described as a person, an abstraction from individuals with concrete traits that arises from the coalescence of the act of exchange and the legal right to property, on the other hand, individuals are characterized as naturally unequal. Clearly, these descriptions are incompatible, since the first seems to imply an egalitarian construal of the individual, whereas the second depicts radical inequality. This disparity leads Hegel to insist on the necessity – and he emphasizes this necessity – of a third description that can reconcile them. He asserts, without any explanation, that the requisite solution is the family as a totality – “the supreme

totality of which nature is capable" – which constitutes a framework within which the two descriptions can be unified.³³

Hegel's presentation of the emergence of the family as the culmination of the development of natural ethical life seems somewhat strange, given that the institutions that were presented in the earlier stages as more natural than the family would appear to be more developmentally advanced. But it is crucial to keep in mind that Hegel's account is phenomenological, not historical. Hegel is exploring the phenomenology of the concept of the universal-particular, and maintains that, structurally speaking, only the family, which is founded on natural relations, meets the following criterion: the relation between individual (particular) and universal is not one of subsumption, but rather reciprocal dependence that brings about the identity of the different.³⁴

The family is the first concretization of the universal, not as an abstraction, but as something that is increasingly disclosed by the growing distancing of human activity from mere satisfaction of needs. But this initial disclosure presents itself in an extreme form, namely, as concealing the particular and negating its unique features, and the retreat from this extreme presentation will, Hegel believes, generate a more balanced account of the universal elements in the particular, and the particular elements in the universal. This first *balanced* description of the universal-particular identity, the relationship between universal and particular, or in Hegelian language, the universal-particular, is the family. The family is the first social institution to satisfy the theoretical criterion Hegel laid down at the outset of his project; that is, it is the first discovery of a model of ethical life that manifests unity of the particular – intuitions – and the universal – concepts.³⁵

This indifference of the lordship and bondage relation, an identity in which personality and the abstraction of life are absolutely one and the same, while this relation is only something *qua* apparent and external, is the [patriarchal] *family*. In it the totality of nature and all the foregoing are united; the entire foregoing particularity is transformed in the family into the universal.³⁶

Hegel is offering a short account of how, in the natural framework of the family as a totality, the oppositions that characterized intersubjective relationships in the various social frameworks discussed previously, such as property, labor, and contract, are all sublated. This sublation follows from the simple fact that the relationship between the various components of the family – the father, the mother, and the children – is

not based on opposition. It is, rather, a relationship in which everyone is an individual interacting with, or confronting, another individual, and the general cooperation between them allows for management – not suppression – of the fundamental oppositions between them. Only within the family can there be cooperation that fosters the interests of each of the members and those of the family as a whole. Actions are taken, not by disregarding the members' uniquenesses, but by preserving them within the family's defining framework.

But why does it not suffice to understand the family as a totality of oppositions? Why must the family be understood as the identity of universal and particular? As noted above, in SEL natural ethical life undergoes a double sublation, that is, a positive sublation and a negative sublation, that will ultimately engender absolute ethical life. But for the negative sublation to be realized, describing the natural family must demonstrate its inadequacy. Hegel indeed indicates this inadequacy in describing the natural family as a seeming totality, but not a true absolute totality.

Here too, Hegel is applying a theoretical criterion to assess a concrete situation: the family relationship is supposed to be the *actual* embodiment of truth, namely, the state of total harmonious balance of the various oppositions within the family (between the spouses, parents and children, siblings), and not merely a simulation or "appearance" (*Schein*) of truth. If the institution of the family does not satisfy the criterion, there is an internal need to sublimate it and recast it in a manner that does. At this point in his argument, that is, at the end of the first part of SEL, Hegel declares: perhaps the family isn't fully a universalized particular, but it is a first, genuine universal-particular, even if we will have to sublimate it and look further for the absolute, not just simulated, balance between universal and particular (a balance that will be found in absolute ethical life).

The child, contrary to appearance, is the absolute, the rationality of the relationship; he is what is enduring and everlasting, the totality which produces itself once again as such. But because in the family, as the supreme totality of which nature is capable, even absolute identity remains something inner, and is not posited in the absolute form itself, it follows that the reproduction of the totality is an appearance, i.e., the children.³⁷

To understand Hegel's claim that the totality embodied by the family is still inner-directed and not realized in the form of the Absolute, it is

helpful to invoke Aristotle's distinction between that which is potential and that which is actual. The family is one of the necessary stages in the evolution of ethical life. Though not the ultimate culmination of the process, the family nonetheless bears within itself the incipient form of ethical life. But the realized form of absolute ethical life is the ultimate goal. For the point I am making, there is no need to decide whether the evolution of ethical life is an Aristotelian teleological process, or a classic example of the dialectical principle according to which a truth is first manifested as a semblance of itself, and only in the course of eliminating the purported truth does the "real" truth fully present itself. What I want to highlight is that the quoted passage illustrates Hegel's use of the dialectical principle of truth to establish the inadequacy of social institutions, and in the case at hand, the inadequacy of the family. Does the natural family reflect full integration of all its members, without opposition or alienation of any member from her natural social framework?

3 The first, negative, sublation in SEL³⁸

As he did for the first part, Hegel begins the second part of SEL, "The Negative or Freedom or Transgression," with a short theoretical introduction in which he outlines his argument's guiding principle, and then presents its concrete expression. The theoretical principle in question is that of absolute negation. In the previous part of SEL, namely, "Absolute Ethical Life on the Basis of Relation," Hegel had attempted to integrate various opposites (e.g., need and work) by subsuming them under concepts (e.g., tool) while preserving the basic opposition; here he will try to overcome the opposition by an act of total negation, or in Hegelian language, nullification. The opposites that emerged, in the previous part, when the individual was liberated from preoccupation with satisfying his basic natural needs, were sublated by the interests motivating the individual to cooperate (division of labor, contract, trade). Hegel now seeks to discern the opposite interests, which motivate individuals to act contrary to, or sabotage, the interests advanced by cooperation.

This act of negating plays a key role in releasing the individual from the fate of being completely determined by her natural environment and circumstances, as was the case at the stage of natural ethics. In this act of negating, of crime, of defying the existing social order, the individual's freedom is fully expressed – even if negatively – for the first time.³⁹ But this assertion of individuality, this self-determination, is indeed only a negation: it is made solely in opposition to the individual's natural

identity and role within the family. Ultimately, however, the inadequacy of this negative self-determination will, dialectically, induce efforts to integrate the individual into a new social framework within which positive self-determination can be achieved.

Looking at the text itself, it is clear from the three sub-sections in this part of SEL that Hegel is indeed discussing actions that run counter to social cooperativeness, which he categorizes under the rubric "crime." The first, discussed in sub-section (a), is "*natural annihilation* or purposeless destruction and havoc," a natural drive that is antithetical to the impulse to work and create that was discussed in the first part of SEL. The second, discussed in sub-section (b), is the destruction of property or theft, which is antithetical to the right to property, and the third, discussed in sub-section (c), is the ultimate act of negation, the actual imperilment of life itself – oppression and murder – as well as what seems to Hegel of equal if not greater importance, the struggle for mutual recognition, that is, for honor.

There is one key difference between sub-section (a) and sub-sections (b) and (c). In (a), Hegel describes a primal impulse to destructiveness that is not directed at anyone in particular but rather at "the abstraction of culture as such," whereas in (b) and (c) he describes destructive negative urges manifested in fights between individuals over property and honor respectively. Hegel begins by describing the general urge to be destructive in order to emphasize that the process of human development presented in the first part of SEL – the process of ongoing distancing from engagement in particular existence (satisfaction of basic existential needs) that ensues from increasing awareness of the conceptual and universal dimension of existence – did not altogether eliminate the primal drives and forces that sustain the natural world. Rather, upon institution of social frameworks satisfying some of the needs that had formerly necessitated the primal destructive impulse, this impulse – which did not atrophy – was now directed at these social frameworks themselves.⁴⁰ Like its constructive counterpart, the destructive impulse underwent various transformations, emerging as crime qua social institution.

As I said, the function of sub-section (a) is to tie the social phenomenon of crime to humanity's primal natural state, but this explanation is not central to Hegel's main argument. The more crucial claim is in the introduction to part 2 ("The Negative or Freedom or Transgression"), where Hegel argues that crime – which is, in light of the processes described in part 1 ("Absolute Ethical Life on the Basis of Relation"), itself inevitable – inevitably produces interpersonal struggles for recognition. Hegel premises this argument on the thesis that there is a strong

conceptual connection between the opposed concepts of crime and justified revenge.⁴¹ "There is an absolute link between *crime* [or transgression] and the *justice of revenge*. They are bound together by absolute necessity, for one is the opposite of the other."⁴²

Initially, justified revenge that follows a criminal act is purely internal, being manifested as pangs of conscience. But these pangs are an ideal inversion, whereby the criminal becomes, as it were, his own punisher. Justified revenge manifested as a guilty conscience is a sort of self-punishment, in which the attempt to overcome the alienation associated with the criminal act is completely internal:

This ideal reversal is *conscience* and it is only something inner, not inner and outer simultaneously; it is something subjective but not objective at the same time. The criminal has directly injured something he regards as external and foreign to himself, but in doing so he has ideally injured and cancelled himself. Inasmuch as the external deed is at the same time an inner one, the transgression committed against a stranger has likewise been committed against himself.⁴³

The inadequacy of an ideal inversion that has no outer expression impels Hegel to search for the external embodiment of justified revenge. Since, at this stage in the development of ethical life, we are still within the province of natural ethics, prior to the founding of political systems with organized penal institutions, we might expect Hegel to seek this complementary aspect of punishment in social sanctions. But Hegel prefers a different solution, putting forward an account on which the criminal seeks an adversary against whom he can present himself as a totality. In this confrontation, the criminal will put his life on the line. The criminal, Hegel asserts, engages in a life-and-death struggle with the individual she has confronted, for only through this struggle can she overcome the self-alienation she suffers in the wake of her criminal deed. This externalization of remorse and compunction as a life-and-death struggle is the actualization – or as Hegel calls it, the objectification – of the criminal act's ideal inversion.

The postulated extreme mortal struggle has both a positive side and a negative. On the one hand, the struggle raises the individual's consciousness that she is a complete totality. For the first time, she grasps that she is alone and independent.⁴⁴ She determines herself solely by herself, and is in no way determined by others. But on the other, the satisfaction produced by winning the conflict may increase the self-reproach that the externalization was intended to assuage.

Rather than quieting the urge to engage in further mortal combat, the possibility of winning enflames it, even though this intensification only increases each antagonist's dread of what the outcome might be. Attaining the self-affirmation that one is independent necessitates undergoing the existential experience of unrelenting yet unbearable dread. Hegel already speaks of this pathology in the introduction, pointing to the inadequacy of such struggle as a means of constituting the individual as a totality, and the need for renewed integration into a social framework where individuality is fully compatible with the framework's inherent generality.⁴⁵

Having described, in general terms, the transition from crime to the struggle for recognition, and having implied – though without offering any rigorous argument for this conclusion – that the transition is a necessary one, Hegel proceeds to examine two concrete forms of such struggle: property crimes, and crimes related to protecting honor.

Hegel takes theft – the appropriation of someone else's property – to be a concretization of the natural destructive impulse, which is no longer indiscriminate, but rather directed at a specific object. But as such, it is not only directed at the said object, but has a broader reach. For property reflects a relation that holds between a person and an object, namely, the relation of having a legal right. Theft is thus principally an injury to the recognized consensus that an object belongs to the party who has a legal right to it, thereby transforming the act of misappropriating the object into an injury to its owner, because the object is *an extension of* the individual who rightfully owns it.

It is important to bear in mind that at the stage of natural ethics, there is still no social institution of courts whose function is to decide disputes over ownership and impose sanctions on those who infringe property rights. Absent any mechanism for resolving property disputes, an attack on property is, in effect, an attack on the individual who owns the property, and indeed, an affront to her individuality itself. The only recourse available to one whose property rights have been harmed is to enter into a struggle with the thief to reestablish recognition of her rightful ownership, and recover the stolen property. And in so doing, she is also re-establishing recognition of herself as an individual.⁴⁶

The real cancellation of recognition cancels that tie too and is *deprivation*, or, when it purely affects the tied object, *theft*. In this tie between the object and the subject, which is what property means, the nullification of the moment of indifference or legal right makes no difference to the specific thing, which remains unaffected....and what is

cancelled in [the subject – P.I.] is not the diminution of his possessions...it is the destruction of his indifference by and in this single act. Now since the indifference of specific characteristics is the *person* and this personality is injured here, the diminution of his property is a personal injury.⁴⁷

Note that the struggle discussed here is not a dispute between two claimants, each of whom has a *prima facie* valid claim to an object that belongs to neither one, but a case of flagrant aggression against the rights-holder.⁴⁸ Nor are the stakes equally high for both parties: the very personhood of the one from whom the object was stolen is threatened, whereas what is at stake for the thief is only the limited benefit she incurs from that object. From this asymmetry Hegel concludes, somewhat puzzlingly, that the one who has been harmed more thereby wins the struggle, since he has more to lose:

Consequently the individual who makes this personal injury a matter of his entire personality must get the upper hand, and make the conversion real, because he posits himself as a totality while the other [the robber] posits himself as particularity only.⁴⁹

The struggle for recognition that arises from a crime against property is, then, ultimately characterized by Hegel as an asymmetrical struggle between the totality of the victim and the partiality of the attacker, who has some particular and partial interest in the object she has stolen. While the owner of a work of art, say, relates to it as an integral part of his life, to a thief it is merely something that has cash value.

Hegel now proceeds to the next phase, that of the struggle between two sides, each of which confronts the other as a totality, in subsection (c). This balanced struggle is presented as a struggle for honor, wherein both sides are willing to endanger their lives to affirm their existence as full and autonomous individuals.⁵⁰ To explain his invocation of the concept of honor as the source of total conflict, Hegel explains that only through honor, understood as a self-relationship, does the individual overcome any particularistic self-determination, and perceive himself as a totality that transcends any particular self-expression.

Through honour the singular detail becomes something personal and a whole, and what is seemingly only the denial of a detail is an injury of the whole, and thus there arises the battle of one whole person against another whole person.⁵¹

Honor is a primordial human phenomenon, whereby injury to honor, or the individual's sense of self-worth, is not just injury to one of the component elements of her self-identity, injury that can be redressed by making a partial claim against the perpetrator, a claim that does not involve mortal danger. Injury to honor is perceived as injury to the very core of the individual's identity, and can be righted only by restoring that sense of self-worth by physically endangering one's life, that is, engaging in a life-and-death struggle.⁵² The struggle for honor is not a struggle for rights that only secondarily turns into a struggle for recognition of one's individuality, but a struggle for recognition of one's self-worth that transcends formal acknowledgment of property rights.

Granted, the victim may – like his opponent – pay a heavy price for his willingness to endanger himself, as the struggle may end in his death, or in an outcome Hegel takes to be tantamount to death, viz., total submission to his antagonist. But the struggle also makes a decisive contribution to the individual, who gains the recognition that she can free herself from others' incomplete determinations of her identity, and, as a free, autonomous individual, achieve her own self-determination. Freedom, in this sense of liberation from other people's partial determinations, can be achieved only through a struggle in which the individual is willing to sacrifice all. Only through total self-endangerment that carries a real possibility of death or subjugation can the individual determine himself as free, or as Hegel puts it, indifferent to determination by his fellow.

In battle, as absolute difference and reciprocal negation, indifference is to be maintained, and the strife is to be assuaged solely by death, in which subjugation is absolute, and precisely through the absoluteness of the negation the downright opposite of this absoluteness, freedom, is upheld.⁵³

We saw that the first struggle for recognition arose from negation of property rights – theft. The asymmetrical nature of that struggle necessitated proceeding to a “balanced” struggle for recognition, the struggle for honor. This raises the question of whether there is a similar imbalance that explains the need to move beyond the struggle for honor as well. Let us take a closer look at the struggle for honor. Here too, Hegel links intensification of the struggle for recognition to an act of negation; this negation is, like the struggle itself, total – murder and revenge for murder. Yet identifying these crimes with absolute negation creates a manifest problem that even a speculative philosopher like Hegel cannot

ignore: who is to be the target of the struggle that results from the act of murder, given that one of the obvious contenders has been killed? Hegel's solution is to invoke the natural, pre-political framework of the family. Injury to one of its members will impel the family to respond by mounting an attack on the offender, even if the offender is himself a member of that family.

The struggle for honor, initially described as a conflict between individuals, is actually between families. We must bear in mind that at this stage, the individual does not lead a self-contained existence, but is an integral part of the family. Precisely because of this, a struggle for honor cannot break out *within* the family, which would be tantamount to a family's attacking itself, but only erupts when a family member is attacked by an outsider, which is tantamount to an attack on the entire family: "the murder has destroyed only one single member or organ of the whole, and so this still living body, i.e., the family, takes on itself the work of revenge."⁵⁴

This invocation of the family is an indication that at this stage – the stage of natural ethical life – the individual's awareness of her independence and autonomy, awareness that was acquired through the dialectical process that began with the struggle, against the thief, for recognition of one's property rights, and continued in the struggle for honor, is limited, or in Hegelian parlance, is only abstract. Despite the individual's efforts to attain recognition of her individuality, the struggle cannot bring about full self-awareness, since it takes place only in the framework of the broader totality of the family, of which the individual is merely a part. Indeed, every achievement thus far has been only partial, and the process of constructing the individual must continue, through negation and sublation. The individual's self-awareness remains to be fully actualized, a development that will occur at a higher level, namely, that of social ethical life.

As a struggle between families rather than between independent individuals, the struggle for honor fails to achieve the goal of moving from the natural ethical framework to the societal ethical framework within which the autonomous individual works together with others on an individual basis. That remains to be accomplished, but the struggle for honor has advanced the dialectical process nonetheless. For Hegel is describing an unfolding process wherein the precondition for the *concrete actualization* of any stage is that it first be manifested *abstractly*. The individual's exposure to the fact that he can be absolutely self-determining is a precondition for emergence of the fully-actualized ethical individual. Though between families rather than individuals, the struggle for honor

constitutes a confrontation with the possibility of mortal danger, and hence, with the possibility of self-determination. According to Hegel, this experience is essential for constitution of the free individual, and it is the free individual who can be fully identified with the society she is part of, and be truly ethical.⁵⁵ At this point, Hegel is ready to proceed to the establishment of absolute ethical life.

4 The second, positive, sublation in SEL

In the third and final part of SEL, "Ethical Life," Hegel retains the structure used in the first two parts. He begins with a short introduction that describes the relationship between the universal and the particular in purely formal terms, and makes no reference to any concrete socio-political situation. At this point in the exposition, after the individual has made various attempts to achieve self-determination through negation, there is renewed effort, on the part of the individual, to achieve self-determination affirmatively, that is, as part of a totality. But now, the individual does not *confront* the totality, as she did previously (by wreaking havoc, theft, murder), but rather is fully integrated into the totality, though still retaining her unique individuality. By making the particular universal, or at least an inalienable manifestation of the universal, the opposition between particular and universal is, Hegel contends, nullified. The earlier efforts to subsume concepts under intuitions, and vice versa, ultimately succeed in neutralizing the subsumption relations by unifying the two into a totality that manifests neither a relationship, nor utter indifference, between them. Hegel formulates this outcome at the beginning of SEL's third part: "Thus in ethical life the individual exists in an eternal mode; his empirical being and doing is something downright universal; for it is not his individual aspect which acts but the universal absolute spirit in him."⁵⁶

Hegel then moves from this formal description of the absolute Idea to its concrete expression, returning the discussion to phenomenological description of absolute ethical life, described in terms of the "people" (*Volk*). Somewhat laconically, he asserts that the people is "a living indifference," wherein every natural distinction between individuals is nullified, and every member of the people, that is, every individual, "intuits himself as himself in every other individual."⁵⁷ Their unity as a people, he avers, nullifies the differences that caused them to confront and oppose one another. Obviously, Hegel is not claiming that individuals' distinguishing features are eliminated in the context of the people. Rather, the governing principle of interactions between members of a people is that members – that is,

individuals – do not perceive each other and relate to each other as opposed in any way, but as expressions of the totality, just as they take themselves to be expressions of the totality. Indeed, each member of the totality relates to himself as constituting a microcosm of the totality, and the differences between individuals are thus, in this sense, dissolved.

Hegel identifies the difference between the people as this undifferentiated, and – as we are about to see – absolutely ethical totality, and the naturally ethical primordial implicit totality from which Hegel started out, in the last sentence of the introduction to SEL, which I quoted at the beginning of this chapter (“The intuition of this totality is an absolute people, while its concept is the absolute oneness of the individuals”⁵⁸). The difference is that the absolutely ethical totality is *self-conscious*. As we saw, there was a gradual process during which the universal, which in the non-self-conscious totality had been hidden (or there was no awareness of it), was increasingly disclosed. Now, at last, conscious knowledge of the totality is possible. This knowledge arises because the individual, through the people’s mediation, is conscious of herself, not merely as an individual, but as an individual who is conscious of herself as an aspect of the universal.

The individual’s consciousness of his absolute absorption into the universal, of the annihilation (*Vernichtung*) of every subjective element of his existence, is the central feature of Hegel’s conception of the relationship between the individual and the collective. In the preceding part of SEL, as we saw, the individual attained self-awareness, and awareness of his uniqueness, through acts of crime and destruction against others. This negativity is no coincidence; it reflects Hegel’s critique of modern philosophy’s attempts to ground all social relations in the individual, who is characterized in a largely negative way, that is, characterized as a subject by being contrasted to objects. Beginning with Descartes, and continuing through modern philosophy, subjects are defined in terms of an inner world, objects in terms of the external world; the dichotomy between them is unfathomable. Hegel’s response is to adduce the individual’s complete absorption into the totality as the means of countering the said negativity and disclosing the positively-characterized individual. His claim that the individual is conscious of this absorption into the totality is an attempt to achieve philosophical integration of autonomy-based models of human existence, which emphasize the individual’s independence, and Aristotelian models, on which individual existence becomes meaningful via the collective.⁵⁹

After identifying the idea of absolute ethical life with the people – a profoundly significant step – Hegel devotes the rest of the discussion to

analysis of social institutions – the state and government – as concrete instances of the idea of absolute ethics embodied in the concept of the people. In SEL as a whole, Hegel seeks to offer an alternative account of the emergence of human society as a political arrangement, and more generally, an alternative account of the emergence of culture. He offers this alternative account, not simply because he considers it more correct than the competing accounts, but primarily because he wants it to serve, on the one hand, as social critique, and on the other, to provide a rationale and consistent basis for a socio-cultural program. The program he has in mind will suggest a way to integrate socio-cultural traditions of the past with the emerging socio-cultural outlook of his own day.

This goal guides the structure of the alternative account right from the opening declaration that the natural and the ethical are identical: “the absolute ethical order appears as nature.”⁶⁰ The natural order is not opposed to the ethical, and we need not liberate ourselves from it if we are to realize the ethical life; it is implicitly ethical. And the ethical is inherently natural. Granted, the ethical, qua natural, is not static, but rather changes, develops, and assumes different forms. The premise that the ethical and the natural are diametrically opposed, Hegel maintains, led to modernity’s core pattern of alienation, whereby every aspect of the individual’s existence is defined as conflicting with nature, and not just physical nature, but human cultural nature.

Hegel’s alternative account is by no means original. It evokes the epic modes of description found in Greek mythology, which indeed served as Hegel’s basic template.⁶¹ Hegel borrows the principal insight of the *Oresteia* – that the rule of law is preferable to the principle of blood-vengeance, or more generally, that in the sphere of justice, rational deliberation is preferable to intransigent ritual – introducing it into his conceptual system, which is very unlike that of ancient Greek drama. Examining the parallel between Aeschylus’ account, in the *Oresteia* trilogy, which recreates the cathartic process Athens underwent in its transition from a vengeance-based ethos to that of due process and the rule of law, and the account that Hegel puts forward in SEL, may therefore present an edifying perspective on Hegel’s project.

The *Oresteia* describes a series of tragic events that befall Orestes’ family; they result from the “original sin” committed by Tantalus of Lydia, the family patriarch. He sought to test the gods by hosting a banquet where he served the boiled flesh of his son Pelops. The gods resurrected Pelops, thereby punishing Tantalus. Pelops married the daughter of Oenomaus, then duplicitously murdered his wife’s father and

took over his kingdom. The couple had two sons, Atreus and Thyestes, who perpetrated heinous crimes while contending with each other for power. Thyestes sought to overthrow his older brother, seducing his wife. Atreus retaliated by committing the ancestral crimes of infanticide and cannibalism at a purported banquet of reconciliation, feeding Thyestes his own children's flesh. Thyestes in turn cursed the whole House of Atreus. Atreus' sons, Agamemnon and Menelaus, vied for the hand of Helen of Troy, who chose Menelaus. Agamemnon married her sister Clytaemnestra. But Paris of Troy soon seduced Helen, and after they fled to Troy, the Trojan War broke out. Agamemnon headed the Greek forces that set sail for Troy to return Helen to her husband. The curse on Atreus' progeny soon began to take its toll. Agamemnon was forced to sacrifice his daughter Iphigenia to the god Artemis so that the winds would convey the fleet to Troy.

The foregoing events are not recounted as part of the *Oresteia* itself, but provide the explanatory background against which the trilogy's tragic plot unfolds, beginning with Agamemnon's triumphant return from Troy nine years after setting out. "Agamemnon," the first tragedy in the trilogy, recounts the murder of Agamemnon and his Trojan mistress Cassandra, a murder perpetrated by Clytaemnestra and her lover Aegisthus in revenge for Agamemnon's having sacrificed Iphigenia.

The crime-vengeance-crime cycle continues unabated in "The Libation-Bearers," the trilogy's second work. Orestes, the only son of Agamemnon's marriage to Clytaemnestra, who has fled lest Aegisthus kill him as well, returns to Argos to avenge his father's murder. Both his return and his act of revenge are depicted as forced on him by the ancient Erinyes (Furies), the gods of blood-vengeance, whose role in the archaic world depicted by Greek mythology is to protect parents from being murdered by their children. They impel Orestes to avenge his father's murder by killing Clytaemnestra, knowing that this will in turn require Orestes' death.

In the "Eumenides," the last play in the trilogy, there is an attempt to end the cycle of violence. The Erinyes who pushed Orestes to avenge his father's death now hound him relentlessly for having killed his mother and her lover – a crime it is their duty to avenge. Apollo, who is protecting Orestes, cannot avert the Erinyes' frenzied pursuit of a matricide; he therefore tells Orestes to go to Athens and turn to Athena. She can hold a trial, where the justness of Orestes' deed can be established, and the Erinyes appeased. At the trial, both sides present their arguments. Orestes argues that his revenge was justified, the Erinyes argue that they fear the institution of the family is in jeopardy. The trial ends

in a hung jury, so Orestes is acquitted and returns to Argos. The cycle of violence seems to have been broken. Having agreed to withdraw from enforcing the blood-revenge principle, the Erinyes will henceforth be patrons of deterrence, punishment, and judicial authority, which will be the responsibility of the polis, and executed via the civil courts instituted by Athena. Here we see a clear parallel to the Hegelian mechanism of sublation – over the course of the trilogy, the Erinyes are sublated in a quasi-dialectical process.

In drawing a parallel between SEL and the *Oresteia*, I am accepting the classic, virtually unanimous interpretation of the trilogy, which takes it at face value.⁶² On this reading, the trilogy describes a shift in the understanding of *dikê* (justice, right) from the talionic to the juridical conception. This meaning shift reflects a shift from the way the world is described in the first two tragedies (“Agamemnon,” “The Libation-Bearers”) to the way it is described in the last (“Eumenides”). In the former, blood-vengeance prevails, whereas in the latter, the polis and its civic institutions decide guilt or innocence by rational deliberation. On this reading, the *Oresteia* provides a justification for these institutions, which have been shown to resolve a tragic and seemingly intractable problem. Institutional justice represents the harmonious and consensual resolution of conflicts that, on the talionic understanding of *dikê*, entailed interminable bloodshed.

Though the narrative framework of seeking to end a primal conflict through a process culminating in harmonious resolution is very general, and amenable to application in other contexts, the parallel to the Hegelian dialectical process whereby ethical life is constituted is not merely formal, but also substantive. First, both Aeschylus and Hegel see the natural primal situation, which in Aeschylus’ case involves blood-revenge, as ethical. Neither one describes primordial man’s existence as that of a savage whose existence is entirely solitary and focused on self-preservation, with no social cooperation, and no right and wrong. For Aeschylus, blood-revenge was not simply instinctual, but reflected determinations as to justice and injustice, just as for Hegel, natural ethical life is based on implicit ethical codes.

Second, neither takes man’s early ethical situation to be static; both view it as evolving. Aeschylus describes a transformation in the conception of justice, Hegel describes a transformation in the way property is conceived. A crucial similarity is the role of destructiveness, violence, and bloodshed in precipitating the transition from one form of ethical life to another. In SEL, the destructive impulse, which far exceeds what is needed for self-preservation, eventually impels the transition to absolute

ethical life, much as the “original sin” committed by Tantalus, patriarch of the House of Atreus, and its inexorable consequences, ultimately lead to the rejection of blood-vengeance and traditional modes of conflict resolution, the Erinyes’ relinquishment of their primordial role, and the transition to the institutional-justice paradigm.

Yet I would argue that there is another, deeper, almost metaphysical parallel. In the *Oresteia*, the tragic inevitability of bloodshed is also a natural necessity: the original sin contains within it, so to speak, the seeds of inexorable future crimes. In SEL, Hegel asserts that natural ethical life does hold the potential for the universality that characterizes absolute ethical life, and glimpses of this universality are occasionally visible, though the universality is generally veiled by the ongoing need to satisfy basic needs. Only through a long process of disclosure, which is largely a process of individual distancing from the focus on satisfying basic needs, is the long-hidden universal ultimately revealed in a concrete form, namely, the people.

Let me note one further similarity. That the *Oresteia* is a tragedy is by no means insignificant. Invoking the homecoming theme of Homer’s *Odyssey* as a possible parallel to SEL might have seemed plausible, but we must not lose sight of the fact that Hegel is also expressing critique of the Oresteian outcome. For Hegel is saying that the tragic cycle from which Aeschylus seeks release will also recur even after imposition of the harmonious solution of institutional justice.

In his essay on natural law, Hegel coins the term “tragedy in ethical life” (*Tragödie im Sittlichen*). What does he mean by this term, and why should it be understood as critical of the Oresteian outcome? Let us return to the *Oresteia* and examine another conflict it recounts, namely, the conflict between the individual as part of a family – the natural framework that inculcates the ancestral codes of conduct, and the individual’s existence as a citizen of the polis, whose founding principles are incompatible with those of the family.⁶³ Aeschylus resolves this conflict by having the Erinyes, defenders of the ancient patriarchal values, agree to defer to the laws of the Areopagus⁶⁴ founded by Athena.

According to Hegel, however, this metaphorical subjection to the law involves an irrevocably tragic element, for despite the transition from individual existence in the natural framework of the family to existence in the political framework of the city-state, an element of alienation, including alienation from the law, nonetheless remains, and cannot be overcome. It is this sense of alienation and otherness, which arises mainly from the attempt to supplant the immediacy of natural existence with law-governed actions, actions mediated by law, that Hegel characterizes

as the “tragedy” of ethical life. That is, despite its necessity, Hegel sees the transition from natural ethics to absolute ethics as fundamentally tragic, for it entails loss of the capacity to function without the mediation of a framework in which the individual feels alienated. In many ways, the search for a remedy for this estrangement guides Hegel’s efforts to describe social existence in a manner that does not entail this tragic tension. Aeschylus’ solution fails because it does not suggest a way in which natural individual action can be integrated into the polis’ institutionalized frameworks. That is, Hegel accepts the Erinyes’ claim: “Great are the wrongs inflicted on us...The devious wiles of younger gods have uprooted us from our ancient seat of honor, turning us to nothing.”⁶⁵

The emphasis on the harm to ancient traditions being inflicted by Athens and its citizens is no mere detail, for they represent the new social order, wherein relationships are regulated by law and the courts, annulling the ancient customs. Hegel is critical of this nullification of the old traditions centered on preservation of the natural, family-based social order. He is not opposed to the transition itself – the necessity of which he recognizes no less than Aeschylus – but rather, to the manner in which the transition is carried out. Hegel views the new regime of social regulation by the citizenry via the law and the courts unfavorably, for it rests on negation of the previous social framework. On this point, then, he takes issue with the view expressed in the *Oresteia*. For though the nullification in question succeeds in purging the tragedy of endemic bloodshed, it nonetheless cultivates tragedy in a different form, namely, utter negation of the past, which – on Hegel’s dialectic mode of thinking – will unavoidably lead to adoption of an alienated understanding of one’s history.

Hegel’s notion of the “people” is intended as a solution that overcomes the tragedy as initially manifested, but does not necessarily lead to its perpetuation in this new guise. Its goal is the reverse: integration of one’s history and heritage as a component of identity. The parallel between the *Oresteia* and SEL thus underscores the themes with which Hegel is struggling. It underscores Hegel’s attempt to confront the difficulties that invariably accompany social change and the transition from one normative framework to another, whose ethos is diametrically opposed to that of the framework it is supplanting. How can such a transition be effectuated without generating alienation? This question will continue to engage Hegel as he explores an organic model for the integration of the family, civil society, and the state.

My reading of SEL has tried to show that the themes of separation and alienation, and efforts to overcome them, are crucial to understanding

the text. It has also sought to highlight the continuity between the questions addressed in Hegel's earlier writings, and those he tackled in the Jena period, despite the fact that both the manner in which these deliberations are presented, and the arguments proffered, differ markedly in the Jena period. However, in the literature on SEL, the prevailing interpretation focuses on the individual's struggle for recognition, which is presented as a new theme for Hegel, invoked as an *alternative* to the "social contract" approach of Hobbes and Rousseau. All concur that Hegel rejects the "social contract" approach, on which the atomistic individual's existence gives rise to the reflective thinking that leads to cooperation – the judgment that cooperation is beneficial.

My reading, on the other hand, focuses on the transition from a situation where a lone subject acts on the basis of the desire for self-preservation, to an intersubjective situation where the desire for recognition by others impels the emergence of the self-aware individual. The constitution of individuality originates in the act of social cooperation. There is thus a pronounced contrast between this approach, which reads SEL as focused on constitution of the autonomous individual who is part of a collective, and that which takes SEL to focus on the individual's struggle for recognition. My reading takes Hegel to be arguing that even though modernity's self-understanding rests on principles that appear to contradict the main premise of Aristotelian society (viz., that individual existence gains meaning only through collective existence), a socio-political reconfiguration inspired by the Aristotelian premise is possible.

For a better understanding of how the struggle for mutual self-recognition, which plays the dual role of impelling the rejection of natural ethical life, and fostering the emergence of absolute ethical life, provides an alternative to the social contract approach, we must turn to NL, written during the same period as SEL.⁶⁶ This work critiques two versions of natural law theory, the Hobbesian and the Kantian–Fichtean. Only by taking the critique voiced in this work together with SEL's exposition of the struggle for recognition, will it become clear that SEL's reconstruction of the struggle for autonomy and mutual recognition offers an alternative to the social contract theory.

5 *Essay on Natural Law (NL): critique of method*

Hegel's critique of natural law targets two basic variants of emergent modernity's relationship to natural law. On the first approach, which he calls "empirical," associated with seventeenth-century thinkers, one aspect of human nature, which is patently

multi-faceted – self-preservation – is singled out, abstracted, and taken to be a fundamental principle of natural law. The second variant, which arose in the eighteenth century, completely forgoes access to any purported “nature,” and sets down an a priori formal principle that it takes to be antithetical to natural existence. Hegel sees the principle of the “pure will” à la Kant and Fichte as the leading expression of this approach. Clearly, then, the two approaches differ in their stance on nature: the first contends that we have access to nature, albeit incomplete, insofar as the entire natural world, which can be reduced to self-preservation, is empirically observable; whereas on the second, nature is inscrutable, and human cognition, epitomized by “pure will,” stands opposed to nature.

Despite this difference, Hegel argues, both variants are guilty of the same fallacy: they take a one-sided (i.e., non-dialectical) approach to the relationship between nature and moral law. Both are guilty of setting down a principle and imposing it on a sensory manifold: in the first case, the principle is based on the concept of empirical experience of human nature; in the second, it is an a priori determination.⁶⁷

Here, as in SEL, Hegel’s negative assessment of both approaches ensues from application of his critical principle: does the proposed theory satisfy the precept of absolute unity that nonetheless encompasses diversity? That is, do the foundational principles put forward by the approaches in question express absolute or merely relative unity of the particular and the universal? Hegel gives his answer near the beginning of NL:

Although we have thus identified a specific difference between the two inauthentic [*unechten*] ways of treating natural law scientifically – inasmuch as the principle of the first consists of relations and mixtures of empirical intuition with the universal, while that of the second is absolute opposition and absolute universality – it is nevertheless self-evident that the ingredients of both, namely empirical intuition and concept, are the same, and that formalism, as it moves from its pure negation to a [specific] content, can likewise arrive at nothing other than relations or relative identities.⁶⁸

That Hegel is applying this critical principle of the unity, the identity of particular and universal, is also evident in his detailed evaluations of the two approaches. Empiricism in any form assumes a manifold of sensory data, and since, as a matter of principle, empiricism does not reject sensory input, but rather preserves every sensory manifold, in some form or another, every such manifold must be identified as part of the Absolute. Empiricism therefore maintains that the observer does

not decide in advance what nature is, but rather, nature reveals itself to the observer via the observer's senses. Hegel contends that despite this rhetoric, empiricism contents itself with a limited and finite assortment of properties, which it takes to represent an infinite manifold of properties.

The empiricist move, Hegel asserts, undermines its own description of the Absolute. It replaces the Absolute as infinite with a finite catalogue that purports to be infinite, which leads, as he puts it, to the Absolute's being "immediately annihilated and nullified" as an infinite manifold.⁶⁹ This analysis of the empiricist approach also applies, Hegel claims, to empiricist understandings of the ethical realm. Invoking the term "state of nature," they seek to capture the whole panoply of human behavior, which they assume as a sensory manifold. Yet they understand this term as a hypothetical, imaginary construct that represents the "*nature and destiny of man*."⁷⁰ The notion of the "state of nature" is thus inherently contradictory, being described as necessary and absolute, but turning out to be a fiction:

In this way, what is declared on the one hand to be utterly necessary, in itself, and absolute, is simultaneously acknowledged on the other to be something unreal, purely imaginary, and a product of thought; in the first case, it is treated as a fiction, in the second, as a mere possibility – which is a blatant contradiction.⁷¹

In critiquing the empiricist position, Hegel is assuming that it aspires, as he does, to gain knowledge of the Absolute – an assumption that may be unsound. He does not hide the fact that his starting point is his identity principle, which, he contends, any science that purports to be philosophical must satisfy. But this jeopardizes his entire critical enterprise, since this principle is not necessarily compatible with the premises of the theories he is evaluating. To put it differently, Hegel is basically holding a critical dialogue, not with the theory he claims to be assessing, but rather *with his own view*, whose validity he seeks to establish by demonstrating the invalidity of other views. Paradoxically, he does this in such a way that this invalidity is actually presupposed from the outset, given that the theory being assessed does not share Hegel's premises. In other words Hegel is guilty of *petitio principii*.

However, Hegel also proffers another version of this critique of the empiricist approach to natural law, a version that does not suffer from the aforementioned flaw. In examining Hobbesian empiricism's foundational theme, namely, the transition from natural life to life under

law, Hegel focuses on the concept of human nature it presupposes. This concept is arrived at by a process of elimination, which strips away any element of the sensory manifold that is not grasped as essential, but seems to be incidental, until we are left with what is deemed to be the core description of human nature. Yet here too, Hegel argues, the process has been circular, for the concept that is arrived at by eliminating the manifold's incidental features – human nature – serves as the rationale for distinguishing between one set of features (those deemed essential) and another (those deemed incidental). In other words, it has actually been presupposed. More generally, the unifying principle that was extracted during the process of sifting through the manifold for essential traits was assumed from the outset, *along with* the sensory manifold, and was not, in fact, distinct from it and applied to it “externally,” as it were. This argument, too, basically assumes the Hegelian principle that lack of identity – in this case, identity between the intuited manifold, with its myriad characteristics, and the few qualities invoked to “define” human nature – is tantamount to falsity. According to Hegel, neither the unity–manifold dichotomy, nor the ad hoc linking of the two, can provide a true description of the manifold.

Hegel's detailed critical analysis of the formal approach to natural law employs argumentation that illustrates Hegel's dialectic method. At the first stage, he uses the empiricist position to critique the formal approach, seeking to expose its partiality. For on this approach, there is, as a matter of principle, no way to check, against the real world, any of the universal claims it makes about human nature. Hegel begins by granting, for the sake of argument, the empiricist stance, which prefers the inconsistency that characterizes the sensory manifold to an explanatory principle that rests solely on theoretical deliberation, and has no anchor in concrete human reality.

Empiricism rightly demands that such philosophizing should take its directions from experience. It rightly insists on stubbornly opposing such a contrived framework of principles. It rightly prefers its own empirical inconsistency – based as it is on an (albeit dim) intuition of the whole – to the consistency of such philosophising; and it prefers its own confusion....the determinacy of the content, as supplied by empiricism, forms, with other determinacies, a complex combination which is essentially an organic and living whole, and this is killed by such fragmentation and such elevation of insubstantial abstractions and details to absolute status.⁷²

Hegel thus contends that, from the perspective of the opposition between simplicity and complexity, or between the explanans and the explanandum, the fallacy inherent in the formal approach is far more extreme than that which mars the empiricist approach. For that which, on the empiricist approach, is but a relative contrast, becomes absolute on the formal approach. The empiricists do not take law and nature to be utterly distinct, whereas the formalists take the law–nature divide to be absolute and unbridgeable. To give another example, in place of the empiricist claim, anchored in observation of human behavior across the board, that self-preservation is the dominant motivating principle of human life, the formalists enshrine the *a priori* thesis of the unity of apperception, by which consciousness constitutes nature as a manifold that is subject to its unity-of-apperception principle. Nature thus loses its independent, its positive characterization, and is conceived as merely an aspect, merely a by-product, of consciousness.⁷³ By contrast, on the empirical approach, nature retains its positive characterization, albeit a characterization that does not thoroughly capture nature's full complexity, but rather represents it dimly and inconsistently.

Ultimately, Hegel's critique of formalism amounts to the illusory deceptiveness of presenting a foundational principle as absolute when it is only partial. And its partiality, Hegel contends, arises because it does not resolve oppositions, such as that between law and nature, by dialectically invoking a unifying entity within which the opposed elements can be preserved, but rather, by choosing one element and rejecting the other.

Hegel's critique of both approaches to natural law focuses on the status of their foundational principles. Neither approach fulfills Hegel's basic criterion for philosophical science, which, even at this early point in his philosophical development, he defines as the capacity to provide knowledge of the Absolute. Hegel can be viewed as offering an alternative to the social thought of Hobbes and Kant (who, notwithstanding the significant differences between them, both defend the social contract theory) only if we assume that the capacity to describe the Absolute, as a criterion for evaluating philosophical theories, has a parallel that is applicable in the practical realm, the realm of social and political reality. But in this context, what is this Absolute we seek knowledge of? The Absolute is the unity of opposites. To unify opposites in the social context, Hegel invokes his well-known principle of the identity of opposites: a society is prior to the individuals of which it is comprised. Hegel takes natural law theories, which fail to satisfy this principle, to reflect

an atomistic social theory, on which individuals are prior to the society they constitute.

In other words, the claim that the capacity to describe the Absolute as a criterion for evaluating philosophical theories is applicable to the pragmatic realm, just as it is applicable to metaphysics, is premised on the thesis that the Absolute is not a collection of arbitrarily-linked individuals, and human society is not a collection of individuals grouped together on the basis of mutual consent. The prevailing interpretation of Hegel's social thought, which sees it as an alternative to the social contract view, does, indeed, presuppose this parallel. Often, it is textually anchored in a passage from NL in which Hegel himself links the two accounts – the metaphysical and the moral-political – as parallel descriptions that differ in their degree of abstractness:

But it is the aspect of *infinity* which constitutes the principle of that apriorism which sets itself against the empirical, and we must now consider this in turn. In the absolute concept of infinity, the drift of empirical opinion (with its mixing of the manifold with the simple) in relation to the concept is released from its vacillation, and the incomplete separation [of the two elements] is resolved. It is true that, at a lower level of abstraction, infinity is also emphasized (as the absoluteness of the subject) in the theory of happiness in general and especially in natural law, by those systems which are described as antisocialistic and which posit the being of the individual as the primary and supreme value; but it is not raised to the pure abstraction which it has attained in the idealism of Kant or Fichte.⁷⁴

Setting aside the many differences between them, commentators such as Joachim Ritter, Manfred Riedel, Ludwig Siep and Axel Honneth open their discussion of Hegel's social thought, focusing on the Jena period, by adducing the second half of this passage, where Hegel refers to the atomistic conception.⁷⁵ They blithely overlook the role played in Hegel's argument by the shift from the metaphysical to the political.

Hegel invokes the absolute primacy of the individual, which generates the antisocial outlook – by which Hegel means the ethos of a society that is inherently alienated – as the starting point for presentation of his own social vision. The argument offering a justification for the claim that the Hobbesian–Kantian social philosophy fails, not only as a metaphysical theory, but also as a moral-political vision, is ignored by the aforementioned commentators, and I find this silence peculiar. For whether or not the argument is valid, it undoubtedly serves as the springboard for

the development of Hegel's political thought. In linking the two levels of description, Hegel aspires to scientific–philosophical status for his critique of the dominant socio-cultural ethos, thereby elevating it from mere subjective dissatisfaction.

Although Hegel's political thought may indeed have its genesis in reflections on the events of his time (just as Hobbes' work is often described as a response to the church–state struggles of seventeenth-century England), that is, while his socio-political critique may be rooted in a very specific historical context, the validity he seeks for it is broader, hence his desire to ground it in scientific–philosophical theory.

What is interesting about the commentators' disregard of the theoretical context of Hegel's political argument is that the readings offered by Honneth and Siep do not eschew provision of theoretical justification for Hegel's critique of the atomistic outlook. The justification they propose, however, is put forward as a self-contained account of Hegel's social theory that is seemingly free of metaphysical premises about the Absolute or the scientific–philosophical status Hegel ascribes to his analysis. These accounts seek to present a reconstruction that is not bound by these constraints, despite the fact that knowledge of the Absolute and the pursuit of philosophical science, including critique of culture, are fundamental to the Hegelian project. Instead of viewing the Hegelian project in this broader context, the said interpreters construe it as limited to the context of a debate between two rival camps: social atomism à la Hobbes and the social contract theorists, and a “modernized” Aristotelianism in which the intersubjective struggle for mutual recognition plays a formative role in the genesis of society.

This narrow focus, which is not entirely unfounded, and is to a certain degree anchored in the passage in question, can be readily discerned in the research literature. Honneth, to give but one example, adduces it in his reading of Hegel's two-pronged critique of natural law. He implicitly claims that the critique does not concern itself with the natural law theorists' inability to satisfy the principle of the identity of opposites, as we saw above, but focuses on the fact that both variants of natural law see individual existence as primary, as taking precedence over existence of the collective:

Hegel begins his argument with a fundamental critique of the atomistic premises of modern social philosophy. Despite all the differences in the two conceptions of modern natural law he distinguishes in his text, he sees them as marked by the same fundamental error: in both “empirical” and “formal” treatments of natural law, that is, in Hobbes

as well as in Kant and Fichte, the “being of the individual” is posited as “the primary and supreme thing.”⁷⁶

Having drawn attention to the broader project within which Hegel’s critical view of social contract theory should be understood – a context, I have just argued, that many interpreters of Hegel prefer to ignore – let us now return to Hegel’s critique itself. Hegel’s description of the transition from natural to absolute ethical life is presented as an alternative to the social contract theory. As such, its fundamental premise is that the primordial natural mode of human existence is collective, and not only collective, but ethical. This orientation is manifest in natural ethical life, which Hegel describes as a state in which the initial intersubjective connections are not purely subject-centric, but already presuppose an ethical social framework. Any description of human life that we might conceive of, he maintains, implicitly presupposes, even before the transition from the state of nature to civil society, governance by norms of conduct.

Hegel thus denies, contra virtually all the modern political philosophers, an initial *nomos*–nature dichotomy, and asserts that the two first coincided, and only a prolonged period of development led to differentiation into two disparate realms. The process of differentiation unfolded in such a way that the primal natural identity between nature and *nomos* was explicitly preserved in social institutions that emerged upon the transition from natural ethical life to absolute ethical life. In other words, although, as I have just shown, Hegel disputed both the details and the adequacy of the principal schools of natural law theory, Hegel indeed accepts the key premise underlying these theories, namely, that the transition from natural to social existence constituted a momentous advance. He thus rejects the Romantic “return to nature” outlook, on which the primal state of nature was the zenith of human life.

Yet at the same time, Hegel rejects the view that emergence from the state of nature, and the establishment of higher culture – civilization – mandated institution of an *anti-natural* mode of existence that repudiated natural existence, deeming it unethical, and thereby consigned the individual to perpetual alienation and estrangement. This nuanced outlook compelled Hegel to forge a different conception of the transition from natural to social existence, a conception that could explain the change in status of ethical and social rules of conduct, which went from being natural determinations to normative determinations, without positing a historical time when a gap opened up between natural and social existence.⁷⁷

At this stage in the development of his thinking on these issues, that is, when Hegel is writing NL, only the end-points of the process are completely clear to him. On the one hand, the inadequacy of the natural state, which will lead to its self-negation, is manifest, and on the other hand, the end goal of the process initiated by that originary self-negation, the overcoming of particularistic, one-sided existence, and the transition to a form of existence where the particular is also an expression of universal, is equally manifest. Hegel describes that end-point as the overcoming of particularistic existence, which is achieved by total nullification of its claim to independence, and its complete absorption into universal existence, namely, the people. Hegel encapsulates this insight thus: the existence of the individual is none other than being one with the people. During the writing of NL, the struggle for recognition, as a force propelling the process toward the sought-after goal, and driving the transition from natural ethical life to absolute ethical life, will gradually fill the explanatory void between these poles.

Before proceeding to a detailed description of how the struggle for mutual recognition propels the developmental process, a brief recapitulation of Hegel's argument is in order. NL opened with critique of the theory of natural law, the two main versions of which posit a sharp divide between nature and civil society. This dichotomy was supplanted by the idea of natural morality, which assumed the continuousness of law and morality. Natural morality was not, however, a permanent and balanced situation, but rather contained within itself the need for change and for a series of dialectic "negations." Hegel argues that negations are the essence of the individual who strives to achieve a state of ethical-social existence where the interests of individuals are in harmony with those of the broader society she is part of. The negations that propel the process take the form of conflict, of intersubjective struggles that go well beyond the Hobbesian struggle for self-preservation.

In SEL, Hegel had suggested a means of describing the transition from natural to ethical life, a description not necessarily connected to the struggle for mutual recognition. He described two social classes, one of which enjoyed a mode of existence compatible with absolute ethical life, namely, that of the free individual, whereas the second did not, for although its mode of existence was ethical, its members had no freedom. Ultimately, what distinguished the free from the unfree was willingness to courageously confront mortal danger. In other words, the factor enabling the transition from natural to absolute ethical life was willingness to confront rather than flee from the prospect of death, for only

through such a confrontation was it possible to transcend individual existence. For those who lacked this willingness to face death, existence was circumscribed by restrictive notions such as law, property, and labor, but in facing mortal danger, the individual could attain universal existence that was at the same time an expression of her particularity.

Hegel describes a similar distinction between two classes in NL:

Thus, two classes [*Stände*] are formed in accordance with the absolute necessity of the ethical. One of these is the class of the free, the individual of absolute ethical life; its organs are the single individuals. From the point of view of its indifference, it is the absolute living spirit, and from the point of view of its objectivity, it is the living movement and divine self-enjoyment of this whole in the totality of the individuals who constitute its organs and members. But its formal or negative side must also be absolute – namely work, which is directed not towards the nullification of individual determinacies, but towards death, and whose product is again not something individual, but the being and preservation of the whole of the ethical organisation.⁷⁸

In short, determining oneself as a completely free individual mandates *absolute* self-determination; only absolute self-determination can give rise to freedom. Actions that are partial and limited “negations” (overcomings of Hegelian “difference”) – as, for instance, when an individual engages with nature in the context of labor, or, together with his peers, institutes social norms that restrict freedom of action such as rules prohibiting harm to other individuals’ property – do not suffice to bring about liberation, which can be achieved only through total annihilation of the individual. For the self-determination that nullifies particular existence can only be achieved by confronting death. Those who cannot confront death make up the Hegelian second class:

Then there is the class [*Stand*] of those who are not free, and which has its being [*ist*] in the differentiation [*Differenz*] of need and work and in the right and justice of possession and property; its work deals with matters of detail and consequently does not entail the danger of death.⁷⁹

Returning to the confrontation with death, Hegel’s description of the transition it mediates calls to mind the struggle for honor described in SEL, where willingness to confront death to defend the honor of

one's family likewise served as the ultimate negation that impelled the transition to full self-determination and absolute ethical life. Yet despite the great similarity between the descriptions of the process of self-actualization in SEL and in NL, there is a significant difference. NL puts forward a conceptual connection between willingness to undergo absolute self-endangerment – to die – and the possibility of attaining freedom; this stance is rejected in SEL.⁸⁰ To unpack this conceptual connection, let us first examine what Hegel means by freedom.

For Hegel, freedom is not about choosing between opposed alternatives, since in choosing either option, such putative freedom nonetheless preserves the initial opposition. For the “freedom” to select one option merely affirms the restrictions that constrain my choice: the unchosen alternative has not been eliminated, but remains a real possibility. In other words, unchosen possibilities constrict the freedom purportedly expressed in making the choice. This being so, Hegel argues, freedom cannot be simply the freedom to choose between alternatives, but must instead consist in the attempt to surmount any self-determination that preserves opposed alternatives. Freedom can thus be achieved only if a choice between different possibilities entails the nullification of unchosen possibilities.

That view of freedom which regards it as a choice between opposite determinacies (so that if +A and –A are given, freedom consists in determining oneself *either* as +A *or* as –A, and is completely tied to this *either-or*) must be utterly rejected. Anything resembling this possibility of choice is purely and simply an empirical freedom, which is the same thing as ordinary empirical necessity and is completely inseparable from it. Freedom is rather the negation or ideality of the opposites, of +A as well as –A, the abstraction of the possibility that neither of the two exists; something external would exist for it only if freedom were determined solely as +A or solely as –A. But freedom is the direct opposite of this: nothing is external to it, so that no coercion is possible for it.⁸¹

In essence, Hegel is suggesting an active formulation of the Stoic principle of suspension of judgment (*ἐποχή*), that is, indifference to the various possibilities to which one is exposed, as the pathway to happiness. Hegel is saying that there is a way for one to choose without leaving open further possibilities, thereby achieving the end-result of not being enslaved by them. On the Hegelian reformulation, freedom is conditional on acting in accordance with this principle.

But this active formulation of the principle creates a problem for Hegel: how can he uphold the Stoic, and indeed, Spinozistic principle of imperturbability and impassiveness at its face value, yet premise his account of human development on the Kantian–Fichtean conceptual system? For the latter takes as its starting point the individual as moral agent who confronts a panoply of possibilities between which she must choose a course of action on the basis of rational deliberation. The chosen course of action is an expression of her freedom as a finite, but rational, being. This dilemma can be formulated as follows: either one chooses and is thereby, in being limited by the unchosen alternatives, unfree, or one does not choose, remaining apathetic and thereby forgoing one's individual autonomy and becoming determined by external factors.

Now this might seem to be a false dichotomy, and readily resolved. It would not arise, it could be argued, had Hegel distinguished between two types of reasoning: epistemic (theoretical) deliberation about the rationality of course of action A vs. course of action B, and ontological deliberation, where choice of a certain action (A) causally determines the need to take another action (B). But Hegel staunchly rejects dualism in any form, and hence cannot accept this solution, or the critique it implies (namely, that in failing to make the said important distinction, Hegel's analysis is flawed). He therefore seeks another way of describing the possibility of making a rational choice between alternatives without thereby necessitating either absolute apathy (paralysis), or constrictive false freedom.

Hegel suggests that the concept of death resolves the dilemma, giving meaning to the infinity of choices required of the individual who seeks total self-determination, that is, freedom. Death, mortal danger, and confronting one's fear of death represent variants of the notion of transcending every limitation, eliminating every possibility, or in Hegelian terms, the notion of pure and absolute freedom as absolute negation:

This possibility of abstracting from determinacies is unlimited; or [to put it differently,] there is no determinacy which is absolute, for this would be a direct self-contradiction. But though freedom itself – or infinity – is the negative, it is also the absolute, and the individual being of the subject is absolute singularity elevated to the concept, negatively absolute infinity, or pure freedom. This negatively absolute [element], this pure freedom, makes its appearance as death, and through his ability to die, the subject proves that he is free and utterly above all coercion. Death is the absolute constraint [*Bezwingung*].⁸²

Hegel takes what he sees as the natural "ability to die" to be the state through which the possibility of true freedom – the complete absence of any and all restrictions and coercion – can be realized. Needless to say, he is not claiming that only after death is freedom achieved, which would constitute an utter absurdity. Rather, his point is that consciousness of the various concrete social manifestations of death – war, crime, revenge, punishment – enables one to acquire an awareness of freedom as non-restriction, as the nullification of all coercion, and the elimination of choice as the source of non-freedom. Only through consciousness of death do we become conscious of the infinite negation that is constitutive of the concept of freedom. Not ordinary-language freedom in the sense of casual choice between various possibilities, nor freedom in the Kantian sense of the ability to act solely in accordance with reason, but freedom in the sense of total liberation from constraint and coercion, whether due to natural forces or to the law.

In NL, the theoretical possibility of freedom is established by searching for an infinite negation that can serve as the basis for the concept of absolute freedom. To this end, Hegel invokes the concept of death, arguing for a parallel between death and the absolute negation on which true freedom is premised. The transition from analysis of the concept of death to analysis of its various concrete social manifestations shifts the discussion from the theoretical realm to the practical, that is, to the realm where that concept of freedom can be actualized. Hegel's remarks in the following paragraph seem to be intended as a justification of the transition:

But however vacuous these abstractions and the relation of externality to which they give rise may be, the moment of the negatively absolute or infinity... is a moment of the absolute itself which must be identified in *absolute ethical life*. We shall point out the versatility of absolute form (or infinity) in its necessary moments, and show how they determine the shape of absolute ethical life; from this, the true concept and relation of the practical sciences will in turn emerge. Since our primary concern here is to define the relations which all this involves, and hence to emphasize the aspect of infinity, we shall make the positive presupposition that the absolute ethical totality is nothing other than a *people*; this will also become evident from the following moments of the negative aspect which we are considering here.⁸³

Despite Hegel's rhetoric, there is considerable arbitrariness to his insistence on the necessity of the transition to "the practical sciences."

The “practical sciences” are those that are grounded in the concept of “absolute ethical life,” whose historical embodiment is the people. Here too, as we have seen previously, Hegel simply asserts that the conceptual structure of absolute negation must be manifested in ethical life. This arbitrariness may account for the rigidity of SEL’s conceptual structure, relative to that of NL. For SEL makes a more rigorous attempt to justify the transition, anchoring it in the dual principle (nullification and preservation) of sublation of earlier stages by those that follow, whereby the description of any given stage demonstrates the necessity of its subsequent sublation. This is in sharp contrast to the presentation in NL, where Hegel merely presents strong intuitions (which came to light through critique of the empirical and formal approaches to natural law) regarding the concept of freedom as the absence of restrictions and coercion, intuitions he seeks to illuminate by means of various analogies.

One such analogy, we saw, “translated” the concept of absolute negation to that of death, adducing the latter to segue to a discussion of the class distinction between the free and the non-free. Hegel suggests a few more analogies, all of which, ultimately, are intended to explain the process of restoring or rehabilitating natural ethics, so that the relationships it posits are not based on coercion and restriction, but harmonious. The need for such rehabilitation is explained by describing how the harmonious natural state was disturbed. This disturbance ensued from a process of determination by external forces, which gave precedence to specific elements from among the multitude that made up the natural totality.

The analogies, presented in the third part of NL, draw on a range of sources, from literary genres like tragedy and comedy to natural entities like minerals and the ether. Indeed, this part of the book offers an excellent example of Hegel’s search, in the first years of his sojourn in Jena, for a philosophically rigorous conceptual system. Qua explanations, these analogies have the advantage of being self-standing, as they do not rest on the critical analysis of natural law presented in the first two parts of the book. This strengthens the impression that the analogies are not being used simply as metaphors to explain complicated philosophical ideas, but are being tested as a potential alternative mode of conveying the critical insights presented in the first part of NL.

One interesting analogy that goes beyond trying to describe the genesis of a non-coercive totality invokes literary genres. This analogy provides a first glimpse of the manner in which Hegel will later interpret the transition from natural to absolute ethical life in the context

of the philosophy of history: the unfolding of the modern era will be understood as a tragic process, "the tragedy in ethical life." For by definition, tragedy as a literary genre entails conflict. Focusing on the protagonist, a tragedy explains how a moral agent's fate necessitates her exiting a harmonious initial state, wherein she was at one with the naturally ethical totality, and entering into a state where her individuality is annihilated by a confrontation with that totality. Having been forced out of that idyllic state, the protagonist manifests courage and self-sacrifice, revealing that she is willing to engage in a life-and-death struggle. But the tragedy – and this is the dimension that enables us to understand the Hegelian schema for the philosophy of history – is actually a device for showing how a totality that is a social-ethical-political system transitions from one state to another. The transition is tragic, in the sense that struggle is inevitable, being an inescapable fate.

Hegel takes the Enlightenment, at the heart of which lies the attempt to construct a civil society forged consensually by free and autonomous individuals, to be a tragic process involving the loss of initial innocence, which is ultimately assuaged by a gradual process of sublating the loss. In NL, Hegel does not address the Enlightenment directly, but turns his critical gaze to ancient Greece, which he adduces as a historical concretization of the "tragedy in ethical life." Quoting a passage from Plato's *Statesman*, Hegel describes the formation of a new class, the class of citizens, which seeks to distinguish itself from both the ruling class, and the class of the soldiers, and to constitute collective life on the basis of a contract that provides for the protection of property and forbearance from infliction of injury.⁸⁴ This mutual undertaking enables those who are party to it to avoid the self-sacrifice by means of which, as we saw, individual freedom is attained. Yet the need for self-sacrifice remains, and underscores a conflict within the newly-emergent class of citizens, which seeks a new means of attaining freedom.

What is important for Hegel about the formation of the new class is the account of its emergence from the existing society, which is already a naturally ethical collective, and its eventual reintegration into that totality. This reintegration takes place at the end of a struggle between two competing claims to represent the totality: that of the original, organic collective, which seeks to re-absorb the breakaway element that originated within it, and that of the newly-created, non-organic class, which seeks recognition of its status as distinct and independent of the totality from which it emerged. Here too, the struggle between the existing totality and the emergent totality gives rise to the "tragedy

in ethical life." Hegel describes the eventual reconciliation between the competing claims as follows:

This reconciliation consists precisely in the recognition of necessity, and in the right which ethical life accords to its own inorganic nature – and to the chthonic powers – by giving up and sacrificing part of itself to them. For the potency of the sacrifice consists in facing up to [*in dem Anschauen*] and objectifying this involvement with the inorganic, and it is by facing up to it that it is dissolved. By this means, the inorganic is separated out and recognised as such, and thereby itself taken up into indifference, while the living, by relegating what it knows as part of itself to the inorganic [realm] and consigning it to death, simultaneously acknowledges the right of the inorganic and purges itself of it.⁸⁵

Reconciliation takes place when the organic, natural totality acknowledges that it must respond to the new entity's demand for change, even though this entails sacrificing part of itself. Its recognition of the new entity's claim to separateness is an integral aspect of the establishment of an absolute ethical totality into which the new entity is duly absorbed.

In describing the conflict that leads to this tragic reconciliation, Hegel assumes that the Absolute is the subject of the process. That is, the struggle is an internal conflict – the Absolute's struggle with itself. There is, he asserts, a kind of self-reflective process by means of which the Absolute grasps the tragic process and thereby constitutes itself. Here in NL, Hegel still does not ascribe this process of struggle to Spirit, which he will subsequently do in the Jena lectures on the "Philosophy of Spirit" (1805/1806), and of course in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Rather, he elects to use a description taken from Christian theology, specifically, the notion of the resurrection of Jesus as an expression of God's struggle to achieve His self-revelation:

This is nothing other than the enactment, in the ethical realm, of the tragedy which the absolute eternally plays out within itself – by eternally giving birth to itself into objectivity, thereby surrendering itself in this shape to suffering and death, and rising up to glory from its ashes. The divine in its [visible] shape and objectivity immediately possesses a dual nature, and its life is the absolute oneness of its two natures. But the movement of the absolute antagonism between these two natures presents itself in the divine nature, which has thereby comprehended itself, as the courage with which this nature liberates

itself from the death of the other, conflicting nature. Through this liberation, however, it gives up its own life, because this life exists [*ist*] only in its association with the other life, but is just as absolutely resurrected from it; for in this death, as the sacrifice of the second nature, death is overcome [*bezwungen*]. But appearing in its second nature, the divine movement presents itself in such a way that the pure abstraction of this nature (which would be a merely chthonic and purely negative power) is superseded by its living union with the divine nature.⁸⁶

Hölderlin's "Death of Empedocles" clearly resonates in this passage, not only due to Hegel's indisputable indebtedness at this, as in every, stage of his philosophical development, to the fundamental Hölderlinian theme of the surmounting of alienation and separation, but to another factor as well. For at this stage, Hegel still has not been able to find a suitable conceptual-theoretical alternative to invoking literary genres as a means of articulating the issues he seeks to clarify. The richly-expressive genre of tragedy is a superb tool for portraying the radical changes necessitated by the inexorable conflicts arising from loss of a harmonious initial state. This was certainly true for classical Greek society, which had recourse to tragedy to work through foundational conflicts including that between custom and law, between the city-state (*polis*) and the family, and the *ur*-conflict that in a sense encompassed all the other conflicts, namely, that between *logos* and *myth*. And it is equally true *vis-à-vis* describing the maladies of modernity, which faces the same conflicts in a very different historical-cultural context.

But looking at the tragic genre itself, and in fact, looking at other literary forms, such as the novel and the comedy, can they indeed offer a justification for rejecting or accepting the stance of one side to the conflict depicted? Are they not merely a means of giving us a better grasp of the existential experience of the conflict itself?

Despite the undeniable explanatory power of that existential experience, and especially its ability to enhance our understanding of the motives for the characters' actions – an understanding through which we either acquiesce in the tragic dimension of the human condition, or resolve to overcome it – Hegel is keenly aware that, on its own, neither tragedy nor any genre can suffice to deliver a compelling conceptual justification for the core goal of his philosophical enterprise – diagnosis and resolution of the crisis of fragmentation endemic to modernity. Pursuing the genre of tragedy, that is, forgoing philosophy in favor of

artistic engagement, the Schillerian response to the crisis, is not the solution.

Hegel alludes to this in his description of the Absolute as the subject of the tragic genre, because with this characterization, the tragic genre is downgraded, so to speak, from a medium that puts forward an argument to a medium that merely presents a description. Tragedy, he is saying, describes a conflict, but the rationale for the conflict, that is, the explanation Hegel adduces for it, must come from somewhere else. In NL, it comes from theology. But having reached the conclusion that tragedy is powerless to propel the social dialectic forward, Hegel will soon move in a different direction: toward a conceptual system that, first in the 1803–1804 and 1805–1806 lectures, then in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, places his discovery of the idea of ‘Spirit’ front and center.

Hegel’s new argument will coalesce and develop around the notion of Spirit, yet it will integrate the tragic description of the existential dilemma as an expression of the unfolding of truth, of the Absolute. That is, the rejection of tragedy’s adequacy as a framework for resolving the crisis of fragmentation should not be taken to imply that tragedy is utterly useless for Hegel’s philosophical purposes, and must be supplanted by an alternative framework. Hegel rejects this simplistic linearity. Rather, tragic portrayals will be anchored in or, better, absorbed into a new conceptual framework, a framework whose terms do not overlap those used in the descriptions Hegel invokes to present and justify his arguments.

The search for a conceptual framework within which the tragic description can be embedded is already evident in SEL, where Hegel frames it as the struggle for mutual recognition, for recognition of property rights, and for honor. But the conceptual framework offered in SEL still lacks the notion of Spirit, which will be defined in the Jena lectures and the *Phenomenology* as the self-conscious subject whose self-description encompasses the account of the tragic struggle for mutual recognition. This self-description will both express the essence of the modern experience and narrate the constitution of the Absolute, without which there can be no philosophical justification for Hegel’s socio-political vision.

3

Jena Lectures 1803/1804

1 Introduction

The preceding chapter explored two of Hegel's early works from the Jena period, which, though somewhat different in emphasis, basically presented the same idea. Both critiqued the theory of natural law, mainly the social-contract theory of political life, and sought a more satisfactory account. Hegel's proposed alternative, the philosophical core of which is Aristotelian, is inspired by a concrete historical model – the polis. Its fundamental principle is the conceptual primacy of social entities over the individuals who comprise them. In the two works in question, Hegel explores the genesis of these social entities, which are not something distinct and differentiated from the totality within which they exist, the natural world: there is no demarcation between the natural and the socio-cultural.

At the initial stage of human development, these two spheres – the natural and the socio-cultural – coincide, but over time they diverge and come to exist as distinct. Hegel's objective is to uncover the process by which renewed integration can be achieved, and the individual can again be at one with the socio-cultural totality, that is, the "people." This re-assimilation into the whole is generated by the same dialectical process of differentiation that constitutes the individual and renders her life meaningful, a process Hegel describes by invoking the distinction between intuitions and concepts. The sublation relations between intuitions and concepts, he argues, reflect the relationship between the particular and the universal. As Hegel envisages the unfolding of the dialectical process, states where one element dominates another will ultimately be superseded by unions of the disparate elements, unions that nonetheless preserve the distinctive features of the merged components.

Yet the conceptual scheme adopted in the texts we will discuss in this chapter, the 1803/1804 and 1805/1806 “Philosophy of Spirit” lectures, is altogether different. These texts are basically lecture notes for courses Hegel gave at the University of Jena, which are not extant in their entirety. The notes would later be called the “Jena Realphilosophie” lectures.¹ The conceptual shift is radical: Hegel discards the Schellingian terminology that characterized SEL, and was also used, though to a lesser extent, in NL, replacing it with the terminology of self-consciousness associated primarily with Fichte, in whose writings Hegel begins to take renewed interest.

Yet despite this shift in terminology, the questions Hegel addressed in the earlier works, and the solutions proposed, are not set aside, and in many ways are retained. There are certain shifts in emphasis, especially with regard to the notions of freedom and human action in terms of which his solutions are framed. In stating his objective, Hegel now invokes the rubric “consciousness”; the wording is nearly identical to that used to state his objective in the earlier works, except that instead of being formulated in terms of “absolute ethical life,” it speaks of “consciousness”:

This is the goal, the absolute reality of consciousness, to which we have to elevate its spirit. It is the totality which it has as the spirit of a people, spirit which is absolutely the consciousness of all, for they *intuit* it, and as consciousness set themselves against [it], but directly recognize all the same that their opposition, their singularity is superseded in it, i.e., they recognize their consciousness as an absolutely universal one.²

Keeping in mind that Hegel did not publish these Jena lectures, and that during the Jena period Hegel is experimenting, searching for the optimal means of presenting his ideas, his motivation for this terminological shift – that is, for adopting the framework of consciousness – warrants investigation. Did he feel that his earlier efforts had not sufficed to validate his vision of absolute ethics? Was he dissatisfied with his account of intellectual intuition as a theoretical description of the unification of the particular and the universal? Did the terminological shift simply reflect a change in the influence of the theories of Schelling and Fichte, respectively, on his own emerging philosophy? Or could it be that despite the apparent similarity between the issues addressed, and solutions proffered, in the earlier works, and those presented in the “Philosophy of Spirit” lectures, at a more profound level the latter

actually represent a radical rejection of the earlier approach, and adoption of a new outlook?

2 Hegel's embrace of the notion of Spirit as self-consciousness

The new "philosophy of Spirit" conceptual scheme does not, we will see, attest to a shift away from the problem of alienation and fragmentation, and the effort to resolve it. Rather, the conceptual framework of consciousness is primarily intended to overcome the main weakness in the stepwise argument presented in SEL: the lack of any internal necessity or compelling justification for the transitions from one stage to the next, which do not follow from any systematic principle. The transition to the framework of Spirit and the theory of consciousness will address this problem. For reasons we will discuss below, Hegel sees the consciousness-based model as better suited to his purpose of providing a conceptual or scientific-philosophical account of the problem of alienation.³ In embracing the notion of "Spirit," Hegel's philosophical project is still focused on the problem of alienation, but no longer directly critiques the culture of modernity. The description of alienation and how it can be overcome becomes the foundation for a philosophical system that seeks knowledge of the truth, that is, of the absolute Idea. The system is a recounting of the process of the self-differentiation of the initial, absolute identity. As the process unfolds, the individuation of distinct "moments" (stages in the development of the Absolute) generates a multitude of particulars. Restoration of the primal identity entails reuniting the multitude of moments into which that identity had differentiated itself; these moments are re-assimilated into the re-constituted Absolute. Hegel calls both the process of restoring the primal identity, and the philosophical engagement with that process, the "philosophy of Spirit."⁴

At the beginning of the third part of his lecture notes from 1803/1804 (the first two parts are not extant), Hegel describes this philosophical system as tripartite, with its three components corresponding to the three stages of the process just described. The first, which treats "logic or metaphysics," corresponds to the first stage, that of absolute identity; the second, "philosophy of nature," describes the differentiation of the initial identity into a multitude of moments; the third, "philosophy of Spirit," describes the restoration and reestablishment of identity, which now unites the infinite multitude of individuals and the simplicity of the initial identity from which that multitude emerged. In describing

the role he envisages for the philosophy of Spirit, Hegel describes this process:

In the spirit the absolutely simple Aether has returned to itself by way of the infinity of the Earth; in the Earth as such this union of the absolute simplicity of aether and infinity exists; it spreads into the universal fluidity, but its spreading fixates [i.e., fragments] itself as singular things.⁵

Spirit, then, is the process of self-restoration of the simple, mediated by a delimited infinite multitude, that is, the union of the simple and the infinite. It is the culmination of this process of self-restoration, the subject of the process, and its object. Spirit's restoring itself is Spirit. And what, precisely, is this Spirit? Hegel asserts that the concept of Spirit is consciousness: "The concept of Spirit, as thus determined, is *Consciousness*, the concept of the union of the simple with infinity."⁶

The identification of Spirit with consciousness, which seems arbitrary and obscure, is, ultimately, an attempt to fully comprehend the idea that the self-restoration of the identity that had become differentiated preserves the infinite multiplicity embodied in nature. Consciousness as the concept of Spirit is intended to capture the idea that Spirit, as a process of unifying the simple and the infinite, the identical and the different, progresses toward the state where knowing itself is tantamount to knowing its otherness, knowing itself as comprising difference. This process of finding identity in difference is encapsulated by the concept of *self-consciousness*: we know ourselves by not knowing something else, or more precisely, we identify ourselves through that which we are not, through that which is other. To think or know that which is other is in essence to think of or know oneself. When we are aware that we are thinking of something other than ourselves, we cannot at the same time not be thinking of ourselves. Hegel describes this unique feature of consciousness as follows:

This concept of Spirit is what is called *Consciousness*; what is opposed to it is itself a simple [being] such that it is implicitly infinite, a *concept*; every moment [of consciousness] is in itself completely the simple *immediate* opposite of itself; the singular taken up in universality without conflict, but *consciousness* is likewise itself the immediate simple opposite of itself...the absolute union of the distinction, the union of the distinction both in being and superseded.⁷

Comparing this notion of unity (unity between the finite and the infinite), which Hegel invokes in describing the concept of consciousness as Spirit, with the notion of unity that was invoked in SEL, highlights the contribution made by the concept of consciousness as Spirit. In SEL, knowledge of the idea of absolute ethical life is explicated in terms of the identity of concepts and intuitions. This identity is set down as a criterion for recognizing and instituting absolute ethical life, but Hegel merely presupposes it, and does not establish its necessity. In essence, the concept-intuitions identity requirement reflects the same quest for unity that lies at the heart of the concept of self-consciousness in FPS.

But in the case of the concept of consciousness, unity between the simple and the infinite is not simply set down as a premise, but reflects a structural affinity, an isomorphism between consciousness, whose essence is to grasp an external multitude with a unitary insight, and the simplicity-infinity dichotomy. In SEL, the assumption that it was possible to reach a state of equivalence between intuitions and concepts, without giving precedence to either element, was crucially important for grounding the notion of absolute ethical life, which similarly manifests a state of equilibrium. Failure to find a way to unify intuitions and concepts while preserving their quintessential differences would have undermined the possibility of absolute ethical life. Hence the fact that the feasibility of equating intuitions and concepts was merely presupposed, but not established, rendered the entire edifice of SEL vulnerable. In adopting – or returning to, if we view this conception as ultimately Kantian in origin – the framework of self-consciousness, Hegel is seeking to reinforce the project he undertook in SEL, and eliminate that vulnerability.

If our account of the transition to the framework of self-consciousness is to be complete, it must integrate Hegel's determination that the conceptual framework he had used in SEL was inadequate, with his broader motivation – finding a solution to the malaise of the culture of his day. In other words, it must explain how the “conversion” of the earlier format to the new one was informed by Hegel's understanding of history, and of the modern epoch. How did his diagnosis of the deficits of a specific historical era shape his proposed solution to the theoretical problem of unifying the individual and the universal, and realizing the Absolute? And how did the solutions to that theoretical problem impact Hegel's understanding of concrete socio-cultural issues?

It might seem that in switching to the framework of self-consciousness, Hegel has lost, or abandoned, his interest in providing an analysis of the

malaise of modernity. But this is not the case. Rather, this paradigm shift reflects the fact that Hegel was facing a profound dilemma: on the one hand, the Absolute had to be an expression of historical reality, but on the other, it could not be constrained by contingent situations. Hegel does not want to be a mystic. His concept of the Absolute, formulated in terms of self-consciousness, must retain a deep connectedness to the actual world, without losing its independence of the world. Can the metaphysical be mediated by the historical?

The dilemma can be formulated metaphysically. How is it possible for a single, total, comprehensive account of everything to nonetheless allow for true differentiation? The difficulty of grasping such a possibility reflects the difficulty of describing the unified totality as mandating something distinguishable from it, namely, the unique features of the individuals that comprise it.

How this theoretical problem is to be “translated” into an account of the malaise of the Enlightenment and its aftermath can be discerned in all Hegel’s writings up to this point. What we must now show is that Spirit, as self-consciousness, can not only successfully tackle the theoretical problem of the totality’s knowability, but also provide a better resolution to the political-social challenge faced by modernity, the historical era heralded by the French Revolution. To appreciate the contribution made by the new conceptual scheme, we must go back and examine what led Hegel to reject various other ways of conceptualizing the totality, the Absolute, and instead espouse the concept of Spirit, deeming it more suitable.

Taking the “Fragment of a System” from 1800 as Hegel’s starting point, where he set out to achieve the “ideal” of his “youth”⁸ by philosophical means, we can trace the reasoning that led him to reject the adequacy of the concept of “life” as a description of the internally differentiated totality. The “Fragment of a System” opened with descriptions of the totality from various perspectives, Hegel’s immediate objective there being provision of an account of the autonomous individual within the framework of the totality. Only on the assumption that the totality had some internal differentiation was the concept of finite being meaningful.

This idea that *the totality is characterized by the capacity for self-negation* which gives rise to differentiation and multiplicity is also the core concept of the ethical-political works – SEL and NL – discussed in the previous chapter. By the time Hegel composes his FPS, this idea has been further developed. The core concept is now presented by Hegel as resulting from a process in which the *finite* plays a constitutive role,

inasmuch as it is the *finite's* self-negation that gives rise to a totality that encompasses differentiation.

That is, in FPS, though there has as yet been no articulation of the idea of the finite as juxtaposed to and separate from the infinite, the totality, Hegel presents an account of the constitution of the totality from a different perspective. The totality no longer imposes itself on particular things, but rather, the finite that is an integral part of the unified whole has the capacity for self-negation, negation which, as we are about to see, will re-form that unity from the multiplicity of particulars. But for this account to be plausible, Hegel must characterize the finite so that its self-negation is not also its dissolution.

Hegel therefore conceives the finite as preserving itself separately from the totality it constitutes, for otherwise there would be little difference between construing the totality as having the capacity to nullify the finite, and construing the finite as giving rise to its own nullification. At the same time, Hegel must describe the finite and the infinite so that the shift from the perspective of the totality that imposes itself on the finite, to that of the finite that is self-determining, does not entail giving up the project of describing them as a unity, as one totality.⁹ The finite that negates itself and is not negated by the capacity of the totality within which it exists would seem to render the totality superfluous, since it is now dependent on the finite and its capacity for self-negation. But in true dialectical fashion, the process is such that the finite, in virtue of its capacity for self-negation, loses its own independence, since although self-negation engenders the finite's separateness, it also gives rise to dependence, inasmuch as the finite must have something to negate.

It is at this very juncture, where the reciprocal dependence of the finite and the infinite – defined, at this point, negatively, in terms of mutual self-negation – is revealed, that Hegel introduces the notion of Spirit as the Absolute, the totality that enables the said reciprocal dependence to be interpreted positively. For the attempt to ascribe the totality's self-negation to the finite discloses the aspect of infinity that is present in the finite. But this disclosure can also be seen as illuminating ascription of self-negation to the infinite, since it is now possible to understand that self-negation as an expression of the finite that is present in the infinite. If we reflect on the description of the totality as encompassing differentiation, we can see that the finite and the infinite are defined in terms of each other, and each can – albeit paradoxically, in the case of assimilation of the infinite into the finite – be assimilated into the other without self-annihilation. The finite does not dissipate within the infinite, and the infinite is not reduced to finitude. What each gives up

as its “self-otherness” does not completely exhaust its essence, and each side is thus dependent on the other, though this dependence allows for distance.

Unless there is a means of connecting the finite to that which is other (other-being), the notion of the finite as “self-other,” together with the identity this generates between the infinite and the finite, would entail the totality’s disintegration into a multitude of finite entities and their counter-beings. To surmount this problem, the relationship between the finite and its other-being must be understood as reflexive, as a self-relation. That is, the finite’s self-understanding depends on that which it is not, on its self-otherness. For Hegel, to be finite is to be part of something, and at the same time distinct from it. Self-consciousness is that which is characterized by this quality of finitude, of being both part of something, and distinct from it. We can now recognize the finite as self-consciousness. But here too Hegel’s dialectic makes itself felt. The thesis of the reciprocal identity and interdependence of the finite and infinite entails that whatever is true of the finite is also equally true of the totality as a whole: the infinite, too, must be understood in terms of self-consciousness. The totality knows itself through its self-otherness, to which it bears a reflexive relation.

Recall the flaw we ascribed to the conceptual scheme on which SEL was based, namely, the fact that it did not necessitate, but rather presupposed, the concept of absolute ethical life as a totality within which the universal and particular are unified. Defining the finite and the infinite in terms of their self-otherness remedies this flaw, because the totality is no longer merely assumed, but follows from the self-restoration of both the infinite and the finite, achieved by overcoming their self-otherness. This idea of self-otherness defining the finite endows the notion of ethical life as a totality – that is, the notion of the Absolute – with a dynamic, teleological dimension.

Hegel’s account of the various transitions that take place in the course of overcoming self-otherness is in essence an argument made up of a series of surmountings of inadequate self-understanding. Adequate self-understanding is self-understanding that is free of alienation between the self and its otherness, or to put it more neutrally, self-understanding where the self and its otherness are in harmony. Hegel’s struggle to come to grips with the problem of the totality as absolute unity, as the Absolute, yet also as characterized in a manner that captures separateness and uniqueness, thus generates a specialized mode of argumentation. For from a description of inadequacy and lack of harmony, negation of the content embodied in that description follows directly. But negation

of a self-understanding on account of its inadequacy is not total nullification that undermines its evaluative content, but rather negation which incorporates that content as partially true, as a "moment" of the truth. Truth is thus conceived as the most comprehensive description of the finite's self-reaffirmation through its infinite counter-being, and of the infinite's corresponding self-reaffirmation through its finite counter-being.

This move – equation of the process of self-reaffirmation with that of constructing the truth from the accumulation of its partial moments, thereby endowing Spirit with an epistemic dimension – will be made explicit only later, in the introduction to the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. But it arises from Hegel's struggle to find an account of the Absolute that can accommodate differentiation.

I have explained the reasoning that impelled Hegel to identify the notion of the Absolute with that of Spirit, and further, with that of self-consciousness. Though it is possible to understand this reasoning in the context of conceptual elaboration of monism à la Parmenides or Spinoza, it is quite clear that the inherent temporality and dynamism that are the essential features of Hegel's account undermine the possibility of understanding the Absolute as a closed self-contained reality. In place of a static totality, FPS sets out a picture of a dynamic reality driven by the reciprocal dependence of two perspectives – the universal, infinite perspective, and the particular, finite perspective – which impart meaning to each other. This reciprocal dependence generates the meaning of the totality as a whole, since neither perspective is meaningful on its own.

The dynamic description of the totality may give the misleading impression that the goal of providing a unified description has been relinquished in favor of providing a description, from the finite perspective, of the ongoing process of change it incurs. To avoid this error, we must go back and examine the *genesis* of the idea of Spirit, which emerges from Hegel's desire to provide a solution to the metaphysical problem that, as we saw, arose in the course of addressing ethical-social concerns.

Hegel's adoption of the concept of Spirit can be viewed solely from the perspective of the philosophical context of what is sometimes called "substance metaphysics," focusing on the attempt to resolve the dilemma of the finite by radically reconceiving the meaning of "substance." This approach links Hegel to a long-standing philosophical tradition that predates modernity's reflective philosophy of subjectivity. But it is also possible to take a much narrower view of

Hegel's enterprise, and read his adoption of the concept of Spirit as *rejection* of that metaphysical tradition, and *acceptance* of the framework of philosophy of subjectivity, within which Spirit will serve to correct the inadequacies of the Kantian–Fichtean approach. The two readings reflect divergent views as to Hegel's stand on the fundamental question of whether political rights are individual rights (the Enlightenment outlook), or rights inhering in the collective body the individual is part of (the classical outlook). Those who uphold the narrower view of Hegel's adoption of the Spirit/consciousness framework, and see him as endorsing the philosophy of subjectivity, take him to have rejected the classical outlook and endorsed the modern. They understand his espousal of the Spirit/consciousness framework as motivated primarily by normative concerns, specifically, by the desire to provide firmer and more nuanced grounds for the ideal of autonomy than had been proffered by Rousseau, Kant, and Fichte, and to rectify the flaws in these thinkers' arguments.

If we accept this approach, we will have to read Hegel's early works, up to FPS, as based on a normative ideal that is opposed to the Kantian understanding of autonomy. Not only would such a premise conflict with the thematic continuity of Hegel's pre-and post-FPS writings – a continuity I am engaged in demonstrating – it would also conflict with the philosophical–ethical–aesthetic project of German idealism in general. For the German idealists, from Fichte to Hölderlin to Schelling, by no means rejected Kantian autonomy. Rather, they disagreed as to the conditions that would allow for the realization of autonomy without paying a price so high that it undermines the entire endeavor. I contend, therefore, that Hegel's adoption of the notion of Spirit does not reflect a retreat from the core German Idealist program, but on the contrary, permits it to be formulated in a manner whereby the demand for autonomy does not entail any loss of unity. And the converse is true as well: on the Spirit model, unity can be achieved without thereby undercutting the individual's uniqueness and autonomy.

In light of these various considerations, we should, I believe, construe the shift to the Spirit model, particularly as expressed in the idea of finitude as “self-otherness,” as “counter-being,” not as undertaken solely with a view to its normative import, and not simply as a new form of substance metaphysics that would rectify the deficiencies of the earlier variants, but rather as melding elements that reflect both the normative and the metaphysical agendas. The shift to the Spirit framework is intended to advance Hegel's program of resolving the fundamental tension between the desideratum of individual *autonomy*, and that of

individual *unity*, viz., unfragmented and integrated existence in the world.

This account of the role of the concept of Spirit, and the goal of achieving unity, clarifies Hegel's motivation for inverting his perspective and taking the finite – the autonomous individual – as the precondition for the possibility of that unity. The inversion constitutes the conceptual realization of the quest to link the autonomy desideratum and the desideratum of achieving unity.

The conceptual framework of the philosophy of Spirit has been the focus of intensive philosophical engagement, generating a broad range of interpretations, and thus attesting to its great hermeneutic fecundity. But although the conceptual framework of Spirit/consciousness itself has received much scholarly attention, far less attention has been paid to its genesis, that is, to the considerations that led Hegel to adopt it, which I have just summarized. And even when its genesis has been explored, most interpretations focus solely on either the normative or the metaphysical motivations for adoption of the Spirit/consciousness framework. A few examples will suffice to illustrate this. Yet only by taking both aspects together is it possible to arrive at a comprehensive understanding of why Hegel saw fit to embrace self-consciousness, and why this notion is so apposite for describing and resolving the problem of alienation.

The normative reading is part of a broader apologetic attempt to rehabilitate Hegel's political philosophy in a non-Marxist manner.¹⁰ Joachim Ritter, in a now-classic series of articles on Hegel's political thought, led this effort.¹¹ In his work on Hegel's critique of natural law theory, Manfred Riedel, one of Ritter's leading students, invoked FPS as vital to the rehabilitation effort. Riedel presents Hegel's newfound interest in Fichte – an interest he sees as a positive development – as ensuing from the fact that Hegel sought to reconcile the premises of the classical (especially the Aristotelian) political-social outlook with those of its modern subject-centric counterpart. Whereas in his earlier Jena works Hegel had, Riedel claims, upheld the classical outlook as an alternative to the modern, of which he was critical, in FPS Hegel changes course, critiquing the classical view, and emphasizing the centrality of the cognizing subject.

Taking these two categories [Rousseau's "general will"; the legally-competent "person"] into the system of ethics signifies a move away from classical political thought and its concept of nature which Hegel abstractly opposed to modern natural law theory from 1802–1804.

With the recognition of “law” as the immediacy of ethical life and its assimilation into the concept, the moment of individuality, the point of origin of modern natural law theory, is established. In this way, after the vacillations of the early Jena period, Hegel finds his way back to the view of natural law found in Rousseau, Kant and Fichte, which he had supported once before, during the 1790s.¹²

Riedel argues that the confrontation between the classical and modern outlooks induces Hegel to seek, in FPS, to overcome their respective limitations by formulating a new approach. The most comprehensive version of this synthesis, he maintains, is ultimately presented in Hegel's mature political work, the *Philosophy of Right*, published in 1821. Riedel sees the transition to the framework of consciousness, by way of renewed attentiveness to Fichte, as marking the turning point in Hegel's attitude to the modern theory of natural law. It is here that, according to Riedel, Hegel begins to take a more positive attitude to the substance of modern natural law theory, seeking its incorporation into the classical outlook that serves as his starting point.

Riedel tends to ignore the theoretical issues underlying the transition, and its role in validating integration of the two worldviews. This allows him to lump together Rousseau, Kant, and Fichte, without noticing that Hegel embraces Fichte's approach, specifically, via Fichte's embryonic notion of mutual recognition, because it provides him with the insight that facilitates a return to the subject-centric approach.¹³

Another interpretation of the significance of the transition to the framework of consciousness is that of Rolf-Peter Horstmann. Horstmann claims that during the Jena period, Hegel makes a series of attempts to formulate a theory of subjectivity that can surmount the problems identified by Kant, Fichte, and Schelling. In his early Jena works, particularly *Faith and Knowledge* and *The Difference between Fichte's and Schelling's System of Philosophy*, Hegel addresses these critiques, but only in SEL does he begin to present, albeit indirectly, his alternative solution. And it is only in the 1805/1806 “Philosophy of Spirit” lectures (SPS) that he arrives at the definitive formulation of his stance. Horstmann contends that the various works are all expressions of the same Hegelian solution to the problem of self-consciousness, but only in SPS does Hegel succeed in overcoming the difficulties that plagued his previous efforts.¹⁴

When Horstmann and others who seek to demonstrate thematic continuity between Kant and Hegel with respect to the issue of subjectivity speak of the problems and impasses associated with that theory,¹⁵ the principal aporia they are generally referring to is that set out in the

chapter on the paralogisms in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. It is here that Kant identifies the fundamental, and irresolvable, difficulty created by the pure concept of self-consciousness. The difficulty is revealed when we ask: what, precisely, is the pure ego thinking when, in an act of self-reflection, it thinks about itself? For to think about itself, it must take as a given the very thing that is the object of its thought.¹⁶ Kant, well aware of this circularity, endeavored to address the predicament by characterizing our understanding of self-consciousness as a paralogism, an invalid inference, and concluded that no purely formal characterization of the self was possible. But this explanation was not found satisfactory, and the aporia was the impetus for the genesis of German Idealism.¹⁷

In light of this historical nexus, Hegel's renewed appeal to self-consciousness theory is hardly surprising. Indeed, if his "subjectivist turn" raises a question, it is in the very opposite direction: how can those of Hegel's works which, at least on the surface, do not appear to tackle the problem of consciousness, nonetheless be shown to address, using a different conceptual framework, the aporia that confounded Kant and the German Idealists? It is in this vein, for instance, that Horstmann reads SEL as anticipating what Hegel will state more explicitly in the two series of "Philosophy of Spirit" lectures (FPS and SPS).

It should be apparent to readers that my own account rejects the continuity thesis and the ensuing hermeneutic constraint that Hegel's writings must be shown to pivot on the epistemic question of the cognizing subject. On the contrary, it assumes that the problem Hegel addresses in SEL is indeed the problem overtly stated to be such, namely, the ethical-social question, and tries to explain why Hegel felt progress on this issue required a "migration" to the conceptual framework of consciousness. My reading thus sees this shift in the context of Hegel's broader project, which seeks to answer a philosophical question – how to constitute autonomy without alienation – radically different from that of the self. Though Hegel's question, being broader, indeed encompasses the issue of the knowing subject, it does so in a new conceptual context. No longer a doctrine to be accepted or rejected, critiqued or revised and strengthened, the philosophy of subjectivity is now viewed as a *symptom*, an expression of an image of man (*Bild von Menschheit*), of human culture, at the core of which lies a serious ethical failing.

Jürgen Habermas has put forward a more complex reading of FPS, a reading that eschews preconceived ideas about the text's meaning, yet, I believe, ultimately takes its chief import to be epistemological. In a seminal article, he argues that while Hegel indeed adopts the self-consciousness framework in FPS, nevertheless, in understanding the

concept of the I, that is, self-consciousness, as Spirit, he gives it an entirely new interpretation. This new interpretation rejects the notion that the I is no more than the reflecting subject's relationship with itself, and takes it to have a social meaning: the I is the product of interaction with other I's: other consciousnesses, viz., other individuals. Spirit is the field of this interaction:

The original insight of Hegel consists in that the I of self-consciousness can only be conceived if it is spirit, that means, if it goes over from subjectivity to the objectivity of a universal in which the subjects who know themselves as nonidentical are united on the basis of reciprocity.¹⁸

Habermas's position is not readily apparent, and has to be carefully unpacked. In terms of its motivation, Habermas's reading seems little different than Horstmann's: the two readings concur that the primary thrust of the Jena lectures is critique and revision of the reflective account of subjectivity. Apart from this, there seems to be significant divergence. It could be claimed that Habermas takes Hegel to venture beyond the theoretical problem of the possibility of a coherent concept of pure self-consciousness, that is, beyond the aporia that occupied Kant in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. It could, that is, be argued that Habermas takes Hegel to address the problem of cultivating the moral individual in the social-historical context, where by definition she must maintain a complex network of connections with the natural entities and individuals who populate her environment.¹⁹

But is Habermas in fact arguing, as I do, that during the Jena period, it is not the epistemological problem that occupies Hegel, but the ethical-social-political question? Scrutiny reveals that Habermas's argument is actually quite different. Habermas links the ethical-social reading that emphasizes the question of interpersonal relations to the epistemological move that interprets the ethical-social discussion as an extension of the constitutive formal conditions for the cognizing subject. Though the Habermasian reading stresses that Hegel focuses on practical consciousness and its cultivation (*Bildung*), he takes Hegel to be responding to the theoretical problem of reflective subjectivity: it is the possibility of a coherent concept of self-consciousness that mandates the assumption that the knowing subject acts within a social context.

Because Hegel does not link the constitution of the "I" to the reflection of the solitary "I" on itself, but instead understands it in terms of

formative processes, namely the communicative agreement [*Einigung*] of opposing subjects, it is not reflection as such which is decisive, but rather, [what is decisive is — P.I.] the medium in which the identity of the universal and the individual is formed.²⁰

Thus the similarity between Habermas's view and Horstmann's is deeper than it originally appeared. Both take the epistemological question to be prior to the ethical, and see it as, not just the starting point for Hegel's argument in FPS, but the substantive problem Hegel seeks to resolve. The difference between them is that Habermas sees Hegel as answering the self-consciousness question by invoking social praxis as well as theory. Horstmann, Habermas, and others view Hegel's thought as the final stage in the effort, which begins with Descartes, reaches its pinnacle in Kant, and is refined and adjusted by Fichte and Hegel, to formulate an unassailable theory of the self as consciousness. According to Habermas, Hegel's contribution to this enterprise is explicating the constitution of the self not simply in terms of abstract categories, but also in terms of mediating concepts – speech, labor, family – that are inherently social.

In the final analysis, then, Habermas's account of what Hegel is doing in FPS is epistemological: Hegel is addressing the constitution of the knowing subject, and, unwilling to accept the Kantian answer, puts forward a modified, intersubjective version of it. Habermas thus would not concur with my contention that Hegel's adoption of self-consciousness as FPS's conceptual framework is instrumental, being intended to advance his efforts to resolve the autonomy–alienation dilemma.

In both series of Jena lectures, Hegel invokes the concept of consciousness in a way that shifts its philosophical context, so that it no longer need be understood in terms of the quest for justified knowledge. Spirit, the Hegelian version of consciousness, ultimately has little in common with the concept of consciousness in the epistemological tradition of the reflective philosophy of subjectivity. Hegel uses the concept of consciousness, not to denote the cognizing subject, but to denote what he calls the “system of middles” (*Organisation von Mitten*), the core organizing principle under which the various modes of mediation fall. Common to all these modes is that in mediating oppositions, they preserve difference. This network of various forms of mediation that are expressions of the concept of consciousness as Spirit, will eventually be seen to constitute the framework for the creation of an ethical society, or as Hegel puts it, a people.

Hence both sets of Jena lectures should be read as developing the thematics of SEL: they narrate the genesis of an achievable ethical society where the individual can thrive within a social framework free of alienation and antagonism. In the envisaged framework, the individual enjoys social solidarity yet does not relinquish her autonomy. As I see it, in these lectures Hegel makes a heroic effort to envisage a means of overcoming the automatization and social fragmentation that he identifies with the reflective philosophy of subjectivity.

Having explained what Hegel is seeking to do in the Jena lectures, some methodological remarks are in order before I turn to the details of his account of the constitution of the alienation-free society. In the scholarly literature, both sets of “Philosophy of Spirit” lectures (1803/1804 and 1805/1806) are usually taken to be more or less identical in content; no important features, formal or substantive, that would warrant treating each set of lectures separately, are identified. Despite this general interpretive propensity, I will treat each series individually (FPS in this chapter, SPS in the following chapter), because the second series is more successful as an expression of the self-consciousness model.

Lumping both series together makes it difficult to see that Hegel’s focus is not adoption of the conceptual framework of consciousness, but how to achieve autonomy without alienation. The self-consciousness-based model of human society must itself be scrutinized in light of the ideal of harmonious, alienation-free existence. Hence after sketching the model in the first lecture series, Hegel made various adjustments and revisions to it, with a view to attaining maximal correspondence between the development of self-consciousness and the unfolding of harmonious society. In the 1805/1806 exposition, Hegel sets out a comprehensive account of “ethical life” (*Sittlichkeit*) as the solution to the problem of alienation that motivates his broader philosophical project.

3 The 1803/1804 “Philosophy of Spirit” lectures

At the end of FPS, Hegel discusses the real, the true, expression of consciousness, namely, the people. In the opening paragraph of section C (“Real Existence: The People”), Hegel describes the actual result of Spirit’s “return to itself” – that is, its self-restoration – the process whose unfolding is recounted in FPS, which, we must keep in mind, is the final part of Hegel’s tripartite philosophical system as a whole.²¹ FPS opened with a formal description of Spirit, its premise being that Spirit’s actual existence is the realization of this formal concept. It then recounted

the process of Spirit's realization, from its initial existence as a formal concept, through its differentiation into a natural multitude, which FPS summarizes briefly, to its self-restoration. The process culminates in the identification of the universalized realization of absolute Spirit with the people:

The absolute spirit of a people is the absolutely universal element, the aether which has absorbed all the single consciousnesses within it; *the absolute, simple, living, unique substance*; it must likewise be *the active substance*; and it must oppose itself as consciousness and be the appearing middle of the opposites, that in which they are one and equally that within which they are opposed.²²

This outcome, which articulates the ethical–cultural ideal of unity whose fulfillment is the solution Hegel has been seeking throughout the Jena period, dispels any doubt as to Hegel's goal in FPS.

Working toward this insight that only within the social framework of the people can individual existence be preserved as an aspect of universal existence, and only within this framework is ethical existence possible, FPS must first describe how the individual consciousness is constituted. Hegel could have, as in most philosophical treatments of socio-political questions, simply assumed the existence of the individual, and proceeded to inquire into the nature of interactions between individuals. But he preferred a different and more complex approach. Hegel links two issues often addressed separately: constitution of empirical consciousness, and constitution of pure, that is, theoretical or absolute consciousness.

The linkage is carried out via two parallel pairs of opposed concepts: ideal vs. real, and theoretical description of ideal existence vs. concrete description of the process of realizing ideal existence. In the self-unfolding of Spirit, that is, in the process of Spirit's self-realization, in its transition from ideal to real existence, the shift from one mode of description to the other is presented as necessary.²³ But the process of Spirit's realization is also the process of constitution of the individual's self-consciousness, which goes through that same process of realizing ideal existence.

This duplication may seem puzzling, but it plays a role in the system. Spirit is the universal medium within which the multiplicity of concrete individuals can achieve self-expression as part of the collective, and at the same time, within which that multiplicity itself is actualized as the people, enabling the self-realization of Spirit. In other words, we can consider the process from two perspectives. We can describe it from the

standpoint of finite consciousness, in which case Spirit becomes the means of individual self-realization, and we can describe it from the infinite perspective of Spirit itself, viewing it as Spirit's own self-realization. Hegel does not adequately distinguish between these perspectives, and shifts between them unceremoniously. For instance, he summarizes FPS, from the perspective of Spirit, as follows:

This *absolute consciousness* is thus a state of supersession of the consciousnesses [that share it] as singular; a superseded being which is at the same time the eternal movement of the one coming to itself in another...it is not the [mere] form of the singulars without *substance*, but the singulars are no more; it is *absolute substance*, it is *the spirit of a people*, for which consciousness qua singular is itself only [the] form that of itself immediately becomes another, the side of Spirit's motion, the absolute *ethical life*; the single [agent] as member of a people is an ethical essence, whose essence is the living substance of the universal ethical life.²⁴

By the end of the passage, Hegel has clearly shifted from speaking from the perspective of eternity, where "singulars are no more," to describing the ethical individual as constituting "universal ethical life."

From our finite, human perspective, the goal of the process of becoming fully self-conscious, that is, of the process of making theoretical consciousness actual, is to reach the state of absolute individuality within the framework of an ethical system. Finite consciousness becomes part of the totality that unifies the two perspectives. At the outset, consciousness is merely theoretical, its existence consists in its *knowledge of* objects. The chief concepts of *theoretical* consciousness are imagination, memory, and speech. From here, consciousness transitions to practical existence, which consists in its *acting on* objects. Hegel characterizes the difference between these two initial modes of consciousness as a difference in their respective domination or "lordship" relations with nature. In knowing objects, consciousness has no mastery over them, and any domination is merely theoretical. Mastery comes only with actually acting on objects. The chief concepts of *practical* consciousness are labor, tools, and property. Here, the domination relationship is not theoretical, but concrete.

Each of these modes of consciousness, on its own, generates a distinct concept of total consciousness. In the case of theoretical consciousness, this totality is internal and cognitional. "This *absolutely simple point of consciousness* is its own absolute being; but as a negative, or in other words

it is the absolute being of the individual as such, as a singular being."²⁵ The transition to practical consciousness – consciousness as active, as acting on objects – generates a different concept of consciousness as a totality: consciousness is externalized and expressed in the family.

In this way the *totality of consciousness* is in the family the totality as an evolution into being *for self*; the individual intuits himself in the other; the other is the same whole of consciousness, and it has its consciousness in the other, in the generated.²⁶

In this description, with which Hegel ends the first part of FPS, the individual is first presented as a social–ethical being, a being who – Hegel will go on to show in the next part – enters into conflict, seeking recognition from her fellow individual, whom she recognizes as independent of her, but whose reciprocal recognition she requires for her own self-constitution. Making this demand for recognition is the beginning of her existence as a social–ethical being who has both fundamental rights and fundamental obligations, whose fulfillment she demands in virtue of being an individual interacting with other individuals. For Hegel, the social–ethical individual is not the starting point for political theorizing, but rather the product of previous intersubjective interactions – speech, labor, and family – that are not defined in themselves as social, ethical or political, but have a *sui generis* status, preparing the individual for social–ethical existence. For Hegel, the individual as a political being is not a theoretical construct, but the outcome of a socialization process, a process we will now explore in some detail.

Hegel begins the constitution of individual self-consciousness with the declaration that self-consciousness is the unification of opposites. It is a third entity that mediates between an act of cognition, and the cognized object. He assumes that any instance of knowing must have an object that is distinct from the act of cognition itself. The connection between knowing something and the object known is consciousness, which unites the act and the object. This explains Hegel's claim that self-consciousness unifies the universality of concepts and the multiplicity of individual entities to which concepts apply. But in discussing this unification, Hegel does not invoke the Kantian rubric of the "transcendental unity of apperception." Rather, he speaks of consciousness as a set of "middle"s – elements that mediate between opposites, but do not cancel out the separateness of the opposites themselves:

Consciousness is the ideality of the universality and infinity of the simple in [the] form of opposition; as universal it is undistinguished

unity of both [universality and infinity]. But as infinity [it is] the ideality in which its opposition *is* and the two [aspects of universality and infinity] are distinct and external to one another in consciousness, they separate themselves; their unity thus appears *as a middle* between them, as the *work* of both, as the third thereby they are related, in which they are one, but [as] that wherein they likewise distinguish themselves.²⁷

Hegel lists three pairs of such “middles” that are active in constituting consciousness, in each of which one mode of mediation is ideal (theoretical), and the other is real (actual), that is, it is the objective externalization of the ideal mode: thought in general (imagination, memory) and speech; labor and tools; family and family property.

The initial emergence of conscious acts, of thought in general, was the direct result of the natural genesis of animal organisms with sensory capacity. The qualitative transition from animal existence to rational existence occurred when this sensing ceased to be instinctive, but generated a gap between the sensing animal and the object sensed. This gap was the first revelation of generality, by means of which acts of sensing that had hitherto been singular and disconnected could be recognized as related.²⁸ How so? The gap creates the internal–external distinction as a real-world distinction whereby that which is sensed is sensed as something outside oneself that one senses within oneself. This is what characterizes conscious, as opposed to instinctive sensing. But this internality, which to some extent constitutes the cognizing subject, also renders the act of sensing ideal, in that it is disconnected from its singular reality and is rendered infinite and universal.²⁹

Consciousness in its ideal potency, *as concept*, has elevated itself immediately out of *sensation*. . . . The ideality of sensation, or its coming to be consciousness, has as its immediate goal [that] active sensation shall become in consciousness something inwardly opposed that has its other-being, and hence precisely the object sensed, in itself, and the sensing [subject] shall become in himself a universal.³⁰

In short, consciousness is first constituted by the transition from sensation experienced as singular discrete experiences to idealized, universalized sensation in the sense just explained. Hegel calls the latter “intuition.” With the emergence of consciousness, sensation, formerly atomistic, is no longer purely natural, but takes the form of intuition. Intuitions are idealized, existing in space and time.

The existence of intuitions in space and time, as the subjective space and time of consciousness, is totally distinct from the objective existence of sensations at the natural, pre-conscious stage, where the relationship between the discrete sensations was fixed, being governed by an external causal order. The field of consciousness, which is temporal, allows intuitions, singly and as related in various ways, much freedom with respect to spatio-temporal positioning. This freedom characterizes the creative imagination, giving rise to the capacity to order single intuitions associatively, in contrast to natural, pre-conscious sensation, where the ordering of sensations was fixed.³¹ At this stage, however, consciousness, being free to create images and conjoin them as it wishes, is trapped by its own internality.

For this consciousness is only subjective and formal, and lacking in real (i.e., non-ideal) actuality: Hegel describes it as a constant dream bereft of any truth. At this phase of its development, then, consciousness is infinite and indeterminate, the polar opposite of natural sensation, which was absolutely determinate. Yet as I hinted above by using the word "trapped," there is a parallel between the two stages: both preclude the acquisition of reliable knowledge. To escape this predicament, consciousness must re-externalize itself, must anchor itself in reality. To advance in its process of self-determination, consciousness must determine itself as not only universal, but also singular.³²

*This formal being of consciousness has no genuine reality, it is something subjective, it does not exist externally; it only is as the form of the abstract, pure, concept of infinity.... This dumb consciousness is its formal being in its own universal element of infinity, and only the formal specification of this universal element; it must gain an existence.*³³

It is at this point, when the opposition between universal and particular, subject and object, is absolute, rendering realization of consciousness imperative, that the concept of consciousness as a "middle," a mediating medium, is introduced. Its initial mediative act is to serve as a sign indicating that something exists outside it. That is, whereas previously, conscious sensing was characterized by internal awareness of that which was external,³⁴ now, with consciousness serving as a middle, there is, *within consciousness itself*, a distinction or gap between intuited object and intuiting subject. There is internal reflection on the object-subject gap.

But in serving as a sign, consciousness functions in a one-sided manner: it indicates something beyond itself, but makes this determination only on the basis of its own intuitions; it does not take the entity

itself into account. As Hegel puts it, the determination is dependent on the thinking subject's "caprice."³⁵ In other words, in its role as a sign, consciousness seems to have independent existence as a separate, objective entity mediating between the intuiting subject and the intuited object, but nonetheless is not a neutral, impartial mediator.

This is due to the fact that the initial act of signing is not verbal, but ostensive: it is an act of pointing. For at this stage, things do not have names, and hence can be referred to only by pointing. In this ostensive role, the sign has no independent existence. Ostension requires both the intuiting subject and the intuited object to be present. The sign mediates between the intuiting subject and the intuited object, but is dependent on the physical presence of natural objects, viz., objects in the outside world. Only by severing this dependence on the existence of physical objects can the sign be an independent mediator, the condition for the emergence of language.³⁶

Consciousness, in its mediating role as a sign, first becomes fully independent in the form of meaning that is concretely instantiated by assigning a name to an intuited object, and more broadly, instantiated in language. But the creation of language requires the emergence of a specific cognitive capacity, namely, memory. Language is the externalization of memory, the existence of names as an independent reality.³⁷ Memory allows for the permanency of an image one can be aware of without having the object it designates present; the said object is, rather, called to mind from memory.

Memory is the mode of consciousness where images are independent of objective existence. The recalled image is other than consciousness, but this "other-being" is within consciousness. Consciousness as memory nullifies the connection to the world outside; memory sustains the connection to objects via their names. For the name's mode of existence, in contrast to that of a sign indicated ostensively, is completely independent of the entities it mediates between, viz., the subject who assigns and uses the name, and the designated object. Memory, then, is internal, whereas language is external.

Memory... is according to its true meaning, not the fact that intuition, or what have you, is the product of memory itself in the universal element... but the fact that memory makes *what we have called sense intuition* into a *memory-thing*, a thought content: it suspends the form of space and time in which they [the sense-impressions] have their other outside of them, in time [that is] likewise ideal, and posits them explicitly as other than themselves.³⁸

"Suspending" the spatio-temporal existence of the thought content in question, which was defined as consciousness's other-being, endows consciousness with the capacity to grasp this other-being in itself, as a kind of self-estrangement. This positing of the thought content constitutes naming:

In this [product] consciousness gains for the first time a reality, because the connection to the outside gets nullified in that which is only ideally in space and time (i.e., has its other-being outside it): and it gets posited ideally on its own account, in that it becomes a *name*; in the *name* its empirical being as a concrete internally manifold living entity is cancelled, it is made into a strictly *ideal*, internally simple, [factor].³⁹

Language transforms the existence of the name from ideal, that is, internal, to real, that is, external. Language is a *sui generis* medium, neither internal nor external, but rather the very middle that Hegel defines as mediative consciousness. But how does it connect the finite particular existence of the concrete I with the infinite existence of the theoretical I? As a multiplicity of names, language is not particular, but general. It is a mode of theoretical consciousness, of distancing oneself from objects and the natural world, and even from one's self. Names for things – words – allow one to see herself in that which is other, for in naming things, the subject sees the contents of her consciousness, her other-being, in external reality.

As Hegel describes the process, there is as yet no intersubjective use of words, and language is used solely as the means by which a given subject creates a rudimentary conceptual system for describing the natural world. This quasi-conceptual system is an externalization of the internal arrangement of self-consciousness as imagination and memory: it is independent of the mental arrangement that gave rise to it. As an external representation of names for things, speech is not, at this stage of its development, a conceptual scheme in the full sense of the term, namely, a set of general rules applicable to multiple particulars. Rather, it is a collection of names for particular things.⁴⁰

When relations between these names for things are identified and themselves named, language evolves into a conceptual system. Creation of this network of connections between names for natural things transforms language from particular to universal: it becomes understanding (*Verstand*). We can characterize language as a system of categories that

apply not, like names, to a manifold of discrete particular intuitions, thereby rendering them knowable, but to names themselves, which bind intuitions into objects. Language thus mediates between intuitions and concepts. Names generate a pre-conceptual collection of objects. Once these objects have been constituted by naming, the relationships between them can be identified, giving rise to a genuine conceptual system.⁴¹

Once a conceptual system has emerged, names for things lose their singularity altogether, and are only understood in terms of their relations to other names. They have been sublated by the conceptual system. The particular is now understood from the standpoint of the universal, and not from its own "solipsistic" perspective. Yet this dependence of a particular name, a particular meaning, on the system of its interconnections to other such meanings paradoxically leads the particular back to itself. For it "rebels" against this external determination, this loss of independence and absorption into the absoluteness of the universal conceptual system, with an act of reflexive self-determination that – formally and ideally – reaffirms its semantic autonomy.⁴²

Speech that elevates itself to understanding, once again goes into itself by doing so, it supersedes the *singular* spoken name. ... The suspended name, the name as posited not according to its singular being, but only according to its relation, i.e., as universal or the concept, must be *absolutely* reflected into itself.⁴³

This self-reflection or inward withdrawal indeed achieves reaffirmation of the name's singularity and absolute self-determination, but at the cost of absolute negation: it negates all the connections that determined it, and thereby becomes absolutely indeterminate. It is now determined as a singular point that has no reciprocal relations with other names, and is purely self-reflexive.

The concept of the understanding is just the unity of consciousness returning out of the name, self-relating to singularity itself and therefore a *determinate* concept, not the absolute unity of consciousness; it must be in the mode of something absolutely returned [i.e., pure essence] ... [something-P.I.] absolutely undetermined, the abolished determinacy of relation, pure relating, the absolute *emptiness* of the infinite, the formal aspect of rationality, the simple, absolute abstraction of unity: reflection as point.⁴⁴

Hegel's account of the first stage in the constitution of consciousness – which began with intuition, where, out of atomistic sensory experiences, consciousness emerged as idealized, universalized sensation – ends with an account of “individuality,” of utterly individual consciousness that determines itself as extreme non-dependence.⁴⁵ It is clear to Hegel that despite this characterization of consciousness as individuality, consciousness is still not an absolute unity. For its relationship to its other-being, at this stage, rests on absolute negation, and cannot preserve the essential difference between the two (consciousness and its other-being). Hence the process of consciousness's formation is incomplete, and must continue.

Consciousness must overcome its absolute self-determination as negation, as non-dependence; it must venture outside itself and face its other-being. But the continuation of consciousness's development must proceed by different means. Rather than relating to an external object theoretically, it must do so practically, by laboring with the object. By means of this activity, consciousness sublates its singular existence as absolute negation, thereby overcoming the impasse that stymied it at the end of the theoretical phase. This overcoming of absolute singular existence takes place in the next phase, when consciousness is manifested as the second pair of “middles”: tools and labor.

Whereas the theoretical stance vis-à-vis a given object consisted in naming it, as imagined and remembered, within consciousness, at the level of praxis we engage with the external object, the physical object. This engagement arises from natural desire, unconscious animal instinct. Satisfaction of this desire results in its momentary self-cancellation, but because the desire will recur, the initial opposition between the desiring subject and the desired object basically remains intact. Satisfaction of the desire at the instinctive level, that is, unconsciously, indeed nullifies the object of the desire, yet leaves the impasse unresolved: consciousness still exists as absolute negation. Desire as such only provides a momentary respite from this negation, only a momentary opportunity for unity between the desiring subject and the outside world, because once it has attained that momentary unity, consciousness has nothing left to relate to, and reverts to the state of withdrawn non-dependence.

Satisfaction of desire that conserves the object of that desire only becomes possible upon the emergence of consciousness as labor. As directed, intentional, desire, labor does not nullify the desired object, but rather modifies it. Consciousness, manifested as labor, as a “middle,” mediates between desiring subject and desired object, enabling both satisfaction of the desire, and the overcoming (sublation) of the

opposition between consciousness as absolute negation and the totality of the outside world:

The simplicity of nullification must be the universal unity, the superseded state of both antitheses, and at the same time the middle in which they are one, and in which, as their one, they separate themselves from their superseded state. ... *Labour* is this practical consciousness as the connection, [the] universal union of both [terms]; it must likewise be as middle.⁴⁶

As labor, practical consciousness mediates between the object's passivity and the subject's activity, allowing for sustained reciprocal engagement. But it still lacks independent existence. It closes this gap by actualizing itself as a tool. Upon manifesting itself as a tool, labor gains universality. By means of the tool, labor, as activity that unifies the desiring subject and the object of that desire, acquires sustained existence that does not depend on the entities it mediates. Labor, which exists only as a theoretical (ideal) mediator, is actualized in the tool. Only upon the actualization of labor in the form of the tool does it manifest its rationality qua mediating consciousness. Just as earlier, speech was the rational externalization of theoretical consciousness, here the tool is labor's rational actualization.

This provides insight into Hegel's understanding of rationality: for Hegel, rationality resides in the general. And indeed, both language and tools are general: the same word is used to denote many particulars, just as the tool is used to produce many different particulars. Now it might, perhaps, have been thought that any product of labor is a manifestation of labor qua "middle," that is, that any natural object that is modified by a subject's engagement with it – raising a crop, say, or domesticating an animal – can be construed as the rational actualization of labor qua "middle." But such actualization lacks the key aspect of tools: labor is sustained in the tool in a manner that allows the tool to be used, and thus, the labor to be repeated, over and over. Hegel's characterization of the tool as the actualization of labor's rationality is due to this feature: the tool represents the permanent availability of labor.

At the end of his remarks on the tool, almost in passing, Hegel mentions another aspect of the tool: it is passed on, generating culture and tradition. Despite the laconic nature of the remark, it is significant, indicating the direction in which the evolution of consciousness will unfold. The tool is the first concrete manifestation of tradition, of heritage, of the transmission of culture from one generation to the next.

It precedes historiography and writing in general. In the realm of practical consciousness, it is only upon using tools that the subject transcends her natural, unmediated existence. Qua means of transmission, the tool assumes the need for connection between different consciousnesses, but at this stage, the stage of consciousness as tool, the tool has not created a self-bypassing *direct* connection, as would a mediator or matchmaker, between one consciousness and another. Rather, its physical presence is required for there to be a connection between the two consciousnesses:

The *tool* is the existing rational middle, the existing universality of the practical process. ... It is that wherein laboring has its permanence, that which alone remains over from the laboring and the product of work, that wherein their contingency is eternalized [immortalized]; it is propagated in traditions, whereas both the subject and the object of desire subsist only as individuals, and pass away.⁴⁷

Hegel now proceeds to the second mode of practical consciousness, which is the third and final pair of "middle"s: family and family property.⁴⁸ The transition can be understood in two ways. It can be understood in terms of the distinction between desire in general and sexual desire; it can also be understood as the shift from indirect connection to direct connection, that is, as the shift from mediative consciousness in the form of the labor and tools, to consciousness that engages with other consciousnesses directly. Of course, these two readings of the transition are related, since what distinguishes sexual desire from desire in general is that it can only be satisfied by engaging with another consciousness, whereas desire in general, for instance, desire to satisfy a basic need (shelter, hunger, etc.), is primarily interaction with nature through labor. The sexual relationship fills a gap in Hegel's account of the interaction between consciousnesses. Up to this point, consciousnesses were aware of one another indirectly, via mediation; now, by actualizing the instinctive need for sex, they know their sexual partner as a separate existence.⁴⁹

Hegel describes the shift from actualization of desire as a single transitory occurrence to its actualization as an act that sustains the desire in a modified form in something else, just as previously he described a parallel shift to tool use as sustaining labor, as representing its permanent availability. There is a progression from sexual relations as satisfaction of a need, satisfaction that generates enjoyment, to creation of a relationship that is distinct from satisfaction of sexual needs, a sustained

and permanent relationship. This transition is characterized as the shift from sexual relations based on desire to sexual relations based on love. The discovery of their separateness, which is made in the course of actualizing their sexual urges, impels the man and woman to nullify that separateness by transforming their natural sexual connection into a love relationship that is actualized in marriage. Due to the terse and schematic nature of FPS, the complex progression of this evolving relationship is described in a single paragraph:

Desire thus frees itself from the connection to enjoyment, it comes to be an immediate union of both in the absolute being for self of both, i.e., it becomes *Love*; and the enjoyment is in this intuiting of oneself in the being of the other consciousness. The connection itself becomes in the same [way] the being of both, and something that abides as much as they do [separately], that is, it becomes marriage.⁵⁰

In love, and in marriage, the relationship that is founded on love, consciousness is able to see itself in the other. During practical consciousness's first stage, consciousness engaged with nature, and was thereby able to break out of its solitary, self-reflective existence. By engaging with objects as labor or tool, it came to know itself in its other-being. But in doing so, it did not know itself as self-as-other. Only in love and marriage does consciousness know itself, through the other, as self-as-other, as consciousness. For in love, in marriage, the self-as-other is united with the self, enabling consciousness to know itself in the other.

Yet marriage is only an ideal (i.e., theoretical) mode of consciousness's existence in its other-being (i.e., in the spouse's consciousness). Children, the couple's progeny, constitute its actualization. The child is the mode of consciousness's existence as actualized mediation, wherein husband and wife know themselves through the child, their other-being. To put it slightly differently, the child is the actualization of consciousness's ideal self-knowledge through the other, that is, its intuiting of itself in the other. The child is the actualization of love, of marriage.

Children thus fulfill two functions. On the one hand, they reflect the couple's having surmounted their existential separateness through love, and actualize the couple's union. On the other, they enable renewed separateness of the spouses after their marital union. For in marriage, because each spouse has self-knowledge through the other – intuit itself in the other – in essence the spouses cease to exist separately. As the reciprocal relationship of being-through-the-other, love nullifies the separate existence of the individuals between whom this relationship

obtains. The child is thus the mediating factor that makes renewed separateness of the spouses possible, in serving as the mediative consciousness through which each spouse becomes re-acquainted with separate existence. What distinguishes self-knowledge through the other in the case of children, from self-knowledge through love and marriage, is that in educating their children, parents reshape themselves as separate. Whereas in the case of love, the unity between husband and wife was an overcoming of the natural opposition between them, a unity that overcame their respective separate existences, in raising children the parents can perceive the constitution of a new and independent consciousness, a consciousness that is "for itself."

Hegel is asserting that as they educate their children, parents are privy to the creation of consciousness whose emergence does not entail any loss of uniqueness and separation, in contrast to the creation of reciprocal self-awareness through love, which does entail dissolution of each lover's individual existence. The child is an ideal locus for the parents' creativity, because its creation allows them to see their own other-being without any loss. At the same time, the parents come to understand themselves as total and separate consciousnesses.

They recognize themselves in [the child–P.I.] as genus, [i.e.,] themselves as other than they themselves are, namely, as achieved (*geworden*) unity. But this achieved unity is itself a consciousness in which the coming supersession of the parent is intuited, i.e., it is a consciousness in which the consciousness of the parents comes to be.⁵¹

It seems, therefore, that Hegel takes the reciprocal relationships within the family, both between the parents and between parents and children, to be decisive in shaping consciousness as the culmination, the fullest expression, of individuality, Hegel's characterization of "totality."⁵² The crucial factor at this stage is that consciousness knows itself in its other-being, not only through its absolute opposite, namely, objects, but through another consciousness.

Hegel sees this stage, where one reaches self-consciousness by engaging with another consciousness, as the culmination of the process of the self-constitution of consciousness as a totality. Constitution "as a totality" should not be understood as referring to an all-encompassing whole, or the network of all the relationships one consciousness has with other consciousnesses, but rather, as *completion* of the process of overcoming modes of partial existence that do not adequately express the essence of consciousness. Consciousness becomes a totality only after

going through two processes: on the one hand, self-externalization, and on the other, the overcoming of the negation that self-externalization necessarily entails.

In other words, self-externalization of consciousness as an object, as that which is absolutely other, is fully achieved only at the stage where the said object is itself a self-consciousness. Only at this stage, when consciousness identifies itself with another consciousness, is it fully and utterly self-conscious. At all the stages in the evolution of consciousness prior to the stage of the family, consciousness does not exist in and for itself, but rather through something else, that is, by its intuiting itself in that which is other. Consciousness achieves existence that is first and foremost for *itself* when it gains the ability to recognize itself in another consciousness; self-knowledge through another consciousness provides consciousness with the means for knowing itself.⁵³ This is the starting point for Hegel's discussion of the struggle for mutual recognition.

Here yet again, Hegel's explanation for the transition from family life as consciousness's existence through another consciousness, to the struggle for mutual recognition, is far from clear, and Hegel more or less posits it as fact. Various explanations for the transition have been offered in the literature. For example, there is an attempt to connect it to the meaning of consciousness as a totality. If the criterion for total consciousness is recognition of one's own consciousness in someone else's consciousness, this necessarily negates that person's claim to total consciousness, since totality, properly understood, entails the overcoming of dependence, of determination by others. Hence each consciousness, in seeking to achieve totality for itself, will have to preclude itself from serving as the basis for any other consciousness's self-determination, as doing so inherently renders it subject to that other self-consciousness.⁵⁴ The problem with this explanation is not that it is incorrect, but that while it explains the general dialectical conflict that impels the process, and why the search for totality must be broadened, it does not explain the need to shift the search outside the family. It does not explain the defect in the family structure that precludes, in principle, actualization of the totality, and makes it imperative to move on to the framework of society, where the individual will have to engage with other consciousnesses that are completely foreign.

It might be suggested that the conceptual framework Hegel used in SEL can serve as the basis for an explanation of the transition to the struggle for mutual recognition. According to this explanation, the transition should be seen as a negation that is a necessary stage in the emergence of ethical life. Existence within the family framework, which is

the fullest development of natural existence, serves as preparation for social-ethical life. The family plays a crucial role in preparing the individual for social existence, imparting to its members the fundamental social skills that will enable integration into society. Once this preparatory stage has fulfilled its function, it must be sublated.

In light of the fact that in both SEL and FPS Hegel is seeking an account of individual existence as “differentiated” self-assimilation into the societal framework, viz., assimilation that nonetheless preserves uniqueness, this explanation is satisfying. Yet it too is problematic, for there are two key differences between SEL and FPS that make it impossible to read them as propounding the very same doctrine. In SEL, the struggle for mutual recognition is essentially negative, because it does not allow both sides to retain their individuality, whereas in FPS it is positive. As we are about to see, the struggle for recognition is a necessary stage in the full actualization of consciousness as a totality, which seemed to have been achieved within the family, but was not, in fact, complete. The struggle for recognition is intended as a means of rectifying a failing in individual consciousness’s self-definition, as part of the process of preparing for ethical existence. In other words, the struggle for recognition plays a different role in FPS, and hence despite the overall correspondence between the two works, rules out the option of invoking SEL as an explanation.

How, then, are we to understand the claim Hegel makes at the end of his discussion of the family in FPS?

It is absolutely necessary that the totality which consciousness has reached in the family recognizes itself as the totality it is in another such totality of consciousness; in this cognition each [family head] is for the other immediately an absolute singular.⁵⁵

That is, how are we to understand Hegel’s claim that the totality of consciousness achieved at the stage of family existence now recognizes itself in a different totality?⁵⁶ Does it mean that, in the constitution of self-consciousness, the role of relationships between the members of a family is, ultimately, instrumental, and no different from that played at the previous stage by objects? Hegel is, indeed, claiming that self-knowledge achieved through someone else, i.e., intuiting one’s self in another consciousness, is ultimately the same as self-knowledge attained through physical objects, and hence that even after consciousness has developed through love, marriage, and raising children, total self-consciousness has yet to emerge. This situation induces consciousness

to strive to be recognized *for its own sake*, and not merely as the means by which another consciousness achieves its own totality.

The family's instrumentality need not entail that existence in the family is unethical. This instrumentality can also be understood as a constraint arising from the natural-biological character of the family framework. Though natural in origin, and thereby ethically "neutral," this constraint precludes the family's serving as the basis for the self-determination of consciousness as a totality. This interpretation of Hegel's insistence that the totality achieved by consciousness within the family can be fully actualized only by demanding – and receiving – recognition from a totally foreign consciousness seems quite plausible to me, especially in light of how he now characterizes full-fledged individual consciousness. This characterization first appears in the section of FPS that follows the section on the family, which addresses the struggle for recognition.⁵⁷ The "single," as Hegel calls it, that is, the fully developed individual consciousness, is consciousness that has itself determined all the essential elements of its existence.

The single is one consciousness, only inasmuch as every single aspect of his possessions, and of his being, appears bound up with his whole essence, it is taken up into his indifference; [in other words,] insofar as he *posits* every moment as *himself*.⁵⁸

Such consciousness cannot be attained in the framework of the family. The concept of consciousness as knowledge of the self arrived at through someone else, along with the additional requirement that consciousness be utterly self-determined, necessarily entails conflict between consciousnesses, the famous Hegelian struggle for mutual recognition. The starting point of the struggle for recognition is Hegel's attempt to extricate himself from the internal contradiction arising from the requirement that the individual be at the same time both other-determined and self-determined. On the one hand, the individual consciousness must actualize itself by recognizing itself in that which is "other," whether this other is another consciousness or an object. But on the other hand, consciousness that actualizes itself in that which is other does not satisfy the defining rubric of total consciousness, namely, absolute self-determination. The attempt to reconcile or somehow evade this seemingly intractable quandary leads to a life-or-death struggle for recognition.

Returning to the text itself, as we will see, it describes a situation very much like the Hobbesian state of nature. Exiting the framework

of family life in pursuit of total consciousness has created an individual who exists for herself, through someone else, in a world of others who similarly exist for themselves through others. This inevitably leads to confrontation, for each of the consciousnesses that exists through another needs to be recognized by that other in order to achieve complete self-determination as an independent individual. But demanding recognition leaves these individuals vulnerable to conflict. Indeed, it renders struggle unavoidable, for individual A's demand for recognition from individual B is tantamount to a pre-emptive negation of B's own need for recognition, which must similarly be achieved through A. Serving as the means for B's self-knowledge would undermine A's independence and self-determination. Hegel defines this situation of mutual conflictual dependence, where each side seeks to negate the other's demand for recognition, as "reciprocal recognition in general":

Each posits himself in the consciousness of the other, cancels the singularity of the other, or each [posits] the other in his consciousness as an absolute singularity of consciousness. This is reciprocal *recognition* in general, and we are to see: how this recognition merely as such, as the positing of one's own consciousness as a singular totality of consciousness in another singular totality of consciousness, can exist.⁵⁹

Invoking the fundamental Hegelian distinction between theoretical and practical, we can see that in the quoted passage, Hegel presents two theoretical conditions: (1) achieving total consciousness requires mutual recognition; (2) achieving mutual recognition requires that each consciousness negate the other. That is, I realize that someone else has to recognize me in order for me to be who I am, and thus demand recognition from the other. The other makes the same demand, causing me to realize that I am dependent on the other. To assert myself as independent, as self-determining, I will try to force the other to recognize me without my having to recognize her. In essence, I seek to make the other – you – into something like an object that provides me with what I need. And the same thing happens, of course, from the other side's vantage point.

From the ideal perspective, then, the quest for total self-consciousness has reached an impasse: it can only be attained through mutual recognition, but mutual recognition can only be attained by negating the other consciousness with whom one has engaged.

At the practical level, Hegel “translates” the two conditions into the concrete reality of conflict. The practical description of the process of attaining total consciousness begins from the premise that it will be necessary to inflict injury, i.e., to engage in acts of concrete negation, to initiate the conflict that will ultimately bring about the desired result, mutual recognition, allowing each side to achieve self-determination as total consciousness. Hegel sees the infliction of injury on someone else as the concrete actualization of the aforementioned second condition, and hence, takes it to be necessary. Hegel is arguing, then, that there is no conceptual means, viz., through rational argumentation, of inducing another consciousness to willingly engage in self-negation, which, we saw, is the sole means by which an individual can achieve the self-recognition necessary to actualize herself as total consciousness. The sole means of attaining this objective, then, is by inflicting injury on the other individual, that is, by concretely destroying his will to prevail in the struggle.

Neither can prove this to the other through words, assurances, threats, or promises; for language is only the ideal existence of consciousness, but here there are actual [consciousnesses], i.e., they are absolutely opposed absolute beings for themselves in opposition; and their relation is strictly a practical one, it is itself actual, the middle of their recognition must itself be actual. *Hence they must injure one another.*⁶⁰

Hegel does not get into the specific details of the injuries to be inflicted, and it seems clear that his main interest is to explicate the internal contradiction in the process by which consciousness seeks self-totalization. But in order to elucidate the idea of negating another consciousness while being dependent on it for one’s own self-actualization, he does briefly sketch two types of injury: injury to honor, and injury to property. These injuries constitute injury of the “whole,” as Hegel puts it. Injury to someone else’s honor, or impugning her integrity, is not something partial, that affects just one discrete aspect of her being, but rather impacts her very essence. Hegel describes it as an “absolute” injury, injury directed, we could say, at the other party’s core individuality – which is indeed precisely what the injurer seeks to harm. The struggle for honor is thus a struggle for the totality of the individual’s consciousness, which seeks recognition and through which the other party seeks recognition.⁶¹

Injury to property is similarly described as total injury. Hegel does not specify why he deems it to be total injury, and I find this claim

less convincing than the claim vis-à-vis honor. Hegel seems to assume that possessions are objects with which consciousness identifies, and hence other consciousnesses that seek to know themselves through my consciousness will similarly identify with these possessions and posit a kind of universal partnership in them. My claim to "own" this property will thus be construed by other consciousnesses as usurpation of common property, and hence as a threat to their own being. Attempts to appropriate the "common" property are therefore intended to satisfy the aforementioned conditions, since the appropriated object is essential for the constitution of total self-consciousness, and its appropriation negates the other consciousness's ability to use the object as a means of constituting itself as a totality.⁶²

Both these modes of concrete struggle, injury to honor, and injury to property, which Hegel characterizes as total injury, are demonstrably dangerous. Indeed, those who engage in them endanger their very lives. In other words, the individual who executes the acts necessary for the constitution of total self-consciousness thereby mortally endangers both herself and the other party. The struggle for mutual recognition is a life-and-death struggle, each side jeopardizing his entire being, his existence *in toto*. Hegel stresses the dire totality of the struggle's possible consequences because he seeks to demonstrate the irresolvable internal contradiction inherent in the idea of mutual recognition, the state where each side seeks to be recognized as a totality by the other. On Hegel's account, mortal struggle is the sole means of achieving complete consciousness. He emphasizes that the possibility that one party will willingly relinquish her honor or property is not a solution, since such surrender necessarily precludes mutual recognition:

Each must posit himself as totality in the consciousness of the other, in such a way that he puts his whole apparent totality, his life, at stake for the maintenance of any single detail, and each likewise must go for the death of the other. ... If he stops short of death in the other's case, and suspends the conflict before putting him to death, then neither has he proved himself as totality nor has he come to cognizance of the other as such.⁶³

Each consciousness's insistence on being recognized in its full totality by its fellow consciousness will inevitably be countered by that same demand on the part of the other consciousness. Actualization of the will to be fully recognized is thus doomed to fail.

Having failed to overcome the contradiction inherent in its quest, consciousness grasps its futility, and revisits its demands. It reconsiders its understanding of totality, in the hope of breaking the impasse. Reflecting on itself, consciousness seeks to change its conception of totality. Now, contrary to its previous understanding of self-actualization, consciousness realizes that it can arrive at complete self-knowledge only by means of “self-cancellation.” By facing the possibility of death in the course of contemplating the struggle for mutual recognition, consciousness has “prepared” itself for universal existence, for existence as absolute. For Hegel, the possibility of “cancellation” of one’s self, one’s singularity, enables the individual to ascend from particular existence to existence as part of universal consciousness. In a move that, as Hegel’s later writings will make clear, is a classic example of the dialectical process, what seemed to be the abject *failure* of the struggle for mutual recognition turns out to be the only state, the only launching-point, from which consciousness can attain self-knowledge through other consciousnesses. It does so by self-cancellation, but this self-cancellation is not achieved directly through another concrete consciousness – another person – but through an act of sacrifice. Consciousness effaces itself, dissolves itself into the universal existence of the people, the ethical substance of which the individual consciousness is part.

The attempt to achieve absolute self-determination as total consciousness, which motivated the individual to leave the family framework, ends with consciousness’s knowledge that the only way it can attain recognition from another consciousness is by sacrificing its independence, by relinquishing its demand to be recognized as a totality. The self-cancellation engendered by this insight does not entail existential acceptance of struggle, self-endangerment, and possible death. Rather, it entails an act of willing renunciation through which – and only through which – consciousness can gain knowledge of its worthiness of recognition by others, knowledge that consciousness must have if it is to determine itself as autonomous. The voluntary act through which the individual renounces her singularity, her independence, takes place, not in the context of struggle between two individuals, but within the broader context of the people. The people is the mediative framework through which individuals can attain mutual recognition, without becoming mired in contradiction, or ensnared in futile conflict over honor or property.

In short, the attainment of complete self-knowledge must be mediated by a joint universal consciousness through which individual consciousnesses know themselves via their peers. The individual consciousness is

"saved," Hegel tells us, because it is willing to relinquish itself, to continually sacrifice its singularity within the universal framework that enables it to reaffirm itself as a *universal* singularity.⁶⁴ Within this framework – the people – consciousness can, after having failed to do so through direct struggle, finally determine itself as rational consciousness.

Hegel describes the process that ensues from the act of self-cancellation as follows:

This *absolute consciousness* is thus a state of supersession of the consciousnesses [that share it] as singular; a superseded being which is at the same time the eternal movement of the one coming to itself in another, and coming to be other within itself; it is universal, subsisting consciousness ... it is *the spirit of a people*, for which consciousness qua singular is itself only [the] form ... the absolute *ethical life*.⁶⁵

This quotation clearly indicates the direction Hegel is headed in, now that the impasse over the struggle for mutual recognition has been broken. His goal – reconciliation of the autonomy–alienation dilemma – has remained constant throughout the Jena period, despite the diverse conceptual schemes and modes of presentation he has experimented with.⁶⁶

4 Three readings of *First Philosophy of Spirit*

The clarity of Hegel's goal notwithstanding, the text is unquestionably obscure, and there is no scholarly consensus as to whether it should be taken at face value, as I have interpreted it, or interpreted as actually addressing a different, less apparent philosophical problem. Three main readings of FPS have been put forward, all consistent, arguably, with its account of the emergence of full-fledged consciousness: a reading that takes it to address the epistemic problem of securely grounding knowledge, a reading that construes it as critiquing Kant's moral philosophy, and the reading I endorse, that is, the socio-political interpretation, which sees FPS as critiquing the ethos of Hegel's day.

On the epistemic reading, in FPS Hegel is critiquing, and suggesting an alternative to, the reflective philosophy of subjectivity. On this view, the struggle for recognition, and the impasse to which it leads, highlight the impossibility, as a matter of principle, of anchoring knowledge in consciousness's self-reflection. This reading is attractive to, among others, those who accept the critique of the consciousness-centric approach favored by twentieth-century analytic philosophy.

This approach takes Hegel to anticipate the thesis that all knowledge is acquired through intersubjective interactions.⁶⁷ Hegel's account of how the possibility of universal consciousness is conditional on self-cancellation of the singular is taken as asserting that knowledge, including self-knowledge, is inherently public, inherently grounded in the social sphere, which endows it with meaning.

The view that FPS is a critique of Kant's moral philosophy pivots on the claim that there is no way to provide universal rational justifications for ethical norms without reference to the social and institutional contexts in which they arise.⁶⁸ Hegel's account of the impasse over mutual recognition represents the heart of this critique: consciousness attempts, and fails, to achieve total self-determination, that is, to autonomously justify all its decisions. Hegel's solution, viz., self-cancellation and absorption into the collective, which indeed serves to ground universal rational justifications for individual actions, thus appears to constitute a solution to the challenge of securing Kantian ethics.

There do appear to be striking parallels between the idea of a universal consciousness actualizable only by overcoming our singularistic propensities, and the Kantian ethos. Arguably, then, Hegel's picture of the self-determining individual whose actions are not selfishly motivated, but motivated by identification with the collective, can be taken as a kind of phenomenological treatment that complements, by supplying concrete content for, the abstractions of Kantian ethics. On this reading, the moral subject can only actualize herself in the social context, which endows actions with ethical import. Hegel's version upholds the central Kantian demand that actions be motivated by moral reasoning, but rejects the conception of such reasoning as the inner deliberation of the self. Rather, it reflects the self's identification with the people.

The third reading, that which – with a modification I discuss below – I find most apposite, is the socio-political interpretation, which sees FPS as critiquing the ethos of the Enlightenment and its aftermath. The origins of Hegel's approach, on this reading, can be traced to the modern political tradition, and specifically, the political philosophy of Hobbes, who sought to provide an account of the emergence of societal institutions based on cooperation between individuals. Prior to Hobbes, the dominant explanation for these institutions was that given by Aristotle, namely, that man is an inherently political animal. Indeed, the socio-political reading of FPS can be understood as a return, albeit nuanced and critical, to the Aristotelian view, and as critique of the Hobbesian account. Here, too, the struggle for recognition is taken to demonstrate the aptness of this reading.

As is well known, Hobbes described the struggle for self-preservation as the rational motivation for individuals to join together and form protective social institutions. Proponents of the socio-political reading make a very significant change to this account, introducing what we might call an “ethical turn.” Though still conceived as the motivation for establishing social institutions, the struggle between individuals is no longer conceived as a struggle for self-preservation but rather, as a struggle for recognition of the individual’s uniqueness. This endows the struggle with normative value, a dimension that is not present in the Hobbesian account, and represents a return – as I said, nuanced and critical – to the Aristotelian outlook. Let me explain this.

Hobbes situated the struggle for self-preservation in the pre-social, pre-ethical phase of human life, whereas Hegel situates the struggle for recognition in the context of social life.⁶⁹ In this context, the normative demand for recognition necessitates changes to existing social institutions, or the creation of new institutions that can accommodate the demand for recognition of the individual in her full uniqueness. The struggle’s ethical import is seen as an alternative to the abstract instrumentalism of the Hobbesian social-contract view of the founding of social institutions. Ludwig Siep, a leading exponent of the socio-political reading, expresses this directly, asserting that Hegel presents the genesis of such institutions as the family, property, language, love, contract, exchange, and so on, as fundamentally motivated by the mutual recognition desideratum, and thus as *presupposing* rather than generating social interaction.

Axel Honneth, who developed Siep’s line of reasoning, expresses this idea as follows:

Hegel was convinced that a struggle among subjects for the mutual recognition of their identity generated inner-societal pressure toward the practical, political establishment of institutions that would guarantee freedom. It is individuals’ claim to the intersubjective recognition of their identity that is built into social life from the very beginning as a moral tension, transcends the level of social progress institutionalized thus far, and so gradually leads – via the negative path of recurring stages of conflict – to a state of communicatively lived freedom. The young Hegel could develop this conception, which has never really been made fruitful, only because he was able to modify the model of “social struggle” introduced in the social philosophies of Machiavelli and Hobbes in such a way that conflict among humans could be traced back, not to a model of self-preservation, but to moral

impulses. Only because he had already interpreted struggle specifically as a disturbance and violation of social relations of recognition could he then locate it within the central medium of the human spirit's [*Geist*] process of ethical development.⁷⁰

All three readings are somewhat plausible; textual support can be found for them, and they are by no means the product of deconstruction or fanciful exegesis of a putative subtext. But the third reading, or more accurately, a variant thereof which underscores the salient role of alienation and the quest to overcome it, is that which best fits the text. While I cannot prove that the other two readings are incorrect, it seems to me that they share a serious flaw. For they present Hegel's enterprise in FPS as reactive, as primarily focused on critique of other views rather than on resolving a philosophical problem of his own. They tend to extract the element of critique from the argument as a whole, and accord it primacy, ignoring or marginalizing both Hegel's motivation for voicing the critique, and his positive suggestions for resolving the problem in question.

Granted, Hegel's argument in FPS implies critique of mentalism, and his stance can be used as a source for a thickened description of the moral agent, but in what context? Is Hegel weighing in on the mentalism–anti-mentalism debate, or probing the psychological inner life of the moral agent? These issues may indeed be interesting to the present-day philosopher, but that does not mean that Hegel himself addressed them. As to the socio-political reading, however, here, though the question of social alienation is alive and compelling in the public and philosophical discourse, it is also the primary issue motivating Hegel's philosophical project, in general and in FPS. There is thus no justification for imposing on the Hegelian text questions that he himself did not pose. My claim, then, is that the other two readings seem to be driven by philosophical issues that are independent of the text itself, e.g., the mentalism–anti-mentalism debate. Though, as I said, Hegel can be taken to contribute to those discussions, the strategy of adducing a text as obscure as FPS in support of one side or the other seems unproductive.

There is also, I believe, an even stronger argument in favor of the socio-political reading. Namely, that the meanings of the other two readings, the epistemic reading and the “critique of Kantian ethics” reading, are conceptually dependent on it. That is, so this argument goes, these readings presuppose the socio-political reading, which imparts meaning to them. For unless the socio-political context is assumed, neither critique of the reflective philosophy of subjectivity – the strategy of anchoring

knowledge in consciousness's self-reflection – nor critique of Kant's "rational agency" theory of morality, can be sustained. To see this, let us return for a moment to FPS.

On the surface, it might seem that the demand for recognition is formulated as a demand made by the individual who seeks to achieve self-determination. Yet this demand presupposes the social context; it is within the social context that the demand, which unquestionably shapes the Hegelian notion of the individual, is made. The inadequacies of the Kantian cognizing subject and the Kantian moral agent that mandate the revision of these notions – the projects Hegel is preoccupied with, according to the aforementioned readings of FPS – only come to the fore within the social context, where consciousness issues its demand for recognition.

4

Jena Lectures 1805/1806

1 Introduction: the rationale for the second series of “Philosophy of Spirit” lectures

In the preceding chapter, which examined the 1803/1804 “Philosophy of Spirit” lectures, I argued that Hegel’s philosophical goal in those lectures was the same as his goal in the *System of Ethical Life*, which he had written the previous year: envisioning an intrinsically ethical society. Transition to the framework of “consciousness,” we saw, brought with it a different, and more adequate, conceptualization of the stages in the development of that ethical society. Hegel seems to believe that adopting the philosophical terminology of the German Idealist thinkers of his day (Fichte, Hölderlin, Schelling) renders his argument, or, rather, its presentation, more compelling. As we saw, Hegel invokes consciousness only as a *tool* for explicating the notion of absolute ethical life; it is not the substantive problem he is addressing. That is, consciousness, as a concept that denotes the cognizing subject, is not an independent focus of Hegel’s research. Keeping this in mind, we can say that the works explored thus far – the *System of Ethical Life*, *Essay on Natural Law*, and *First Philosophy of Spirit* – constitute a single thematic unit, and the differences between them reflect changes in the means Hegel uses to describe the actualization of absolute ethical life as a concrete socio-political arrangement.

The 1805/1806 “Philosophy of Spirit” lectures,¹ however, while continuing the search for the optimal conceptual means of achieving this goal, also mark a watershed. For Hegel now changes his starting point, diminishes the centrality of the structural mechanism of overcoming difference by unifying opposites, and extends the scope of his account of Spirit. Let me address these changes briefly before proceeding to a detailed analysis of the text.

As to the increased scope of Hegel's discussion, we have seen that thus far Hegel's focus has been, not metaphysics or epistemology, but society. He has sought a means of alleviating the alienation of the modern age, alienation that arose in the wake of the Enlightenment ethos of autonomy and individual rights. Attempts to implement the promised freedom instead highlighted the problematics of existence in a fragmented society where assertion of one's individuality and rights generated estrangement, conflict, exploitation, and isolation. Alienation was inescapable. The solution, he argued, was integration of the individual into a harmonious, domination-free social framework. Now, in the second "Philosophy of Spirit" series, this integration is presented as just a stage in the process of attaining absolute knowledge, which is the ultimate expression of the unalienated individual's inner unity. Whereas the three earlier works limited themselves to describing the individual's integration into the people, as an expression of the re-constitution of the lost primal unity, Hegel's account is now expanded to encompass art, religion, and philosophy (*Wissenschaft*), which are modes of the Absolute, of absolute Spirit.

The more profound change is the change in Hegel's starting point. This change marks a shift in Hegel's strategy for integrating the image of classical Greece as perceived by Hegel's contemporaries, and the cultural-political vicissitudes of the Germany of his day, which was on the threshold of dramatic political change: entry into the rights-based cultural ethos of modernity. In the aforementioned works, Hegel's strategy was to impose modernity on ancient Greece, so to speak. Ancient Greece, and what it represented, was the basis, the starting point for the project of realizing the Enlightenment ideals of autonomy and freedom. But in SPS, Hegel reverses this strategy: he takes modernity and what it represents as his starting point, then proceeds to impart to it elements of the classical Greek outlook.

The thrust of this reversal, and the renewed affinity with the Fichtean stance,² is that the individual becomes the chief premise and foundation of SPS, which is now entirely focused on the individual's demand for self-realization. The individual demands recognition, and is called upon to recognize other individuals. Hegel contends that this quest for mutual recognition, set in motion by the individual's desire to fully realize her singularity, ultimately gives rise to the awareness that self-realization can only be achieved on the basis of shared and truly cooperative existence, viz., existence within a harmonious and balanced society. But this is not simply another version of the social contract approach to explaining mutual interdependence. Hegel anchors the

possibility of self-realization in the individual's complete integration into the social fabric, that is, in the overcoming of alienation, isolation, distancing.

Although this sounds very much like the message of the earlier Jena writings, the change in strategy is manifest: the idea that the elimination of alienation is a condition for self-realization is the element of the classical Greek ethos that Hegel introduces into modernity's "autonomous individual"-based conceptual framework, which he now takes as his starting point. This changed strategy for reconciling the ethos of ancient Greece with that of modernity is crucial, because in retaining the Aristotelian picture of human life, Hegel is not merely seeking to preserve a cultural legacy and philosophical tradition. Rather, he seeks to invoke it, albeit not directly or fully, as a viable alternative to the modern model of human development. This is evident from Hegel's recurring critique of nostalgic conceptions of the past, that glorify it and see it as the epitome of excellence in every respect. Clearly, Hegel's adoption of the Spirit framework, his theory of the unfolding of Spirit as a process of alienation, externalization, and self-restoration, is incompatible, in principle, with taking the past, and its various conceptualizations by philosophers and historians, as a replicable model for the present. Thus adoption of the Spirit framework necessitated a shift in Hegel's strategy vis-à-vis the past. He now conceives of the past, not as something that was finished and completed long ago, but rather as an early stage of that toward which we are progressing. The past, thus conceived, is not completely past, nor did it fully come to fruition long ago. It will be completed in a more evolved form in the future, when it will be integrated into that toward which we are presently moving.

SPS is divided into three parts. The first, entitled "Spirit according to Its Concept," examines subjective Spirit, which encompasses "intelligence" and "will." As we are about to see, "will" plays a key role in Hegel's new exposition. It is intended to describe constitution of the individual as a unity of knowing and active consciousness. This individual is the legal person, with rights and obligations, who is capable of successfully engaging in social interactions. An important aspect of this part of SPS is the transition from describing the individual consciousness to describing intersubjective relationships arising from love, including expressions of those relationships in terms of acquisition of property, and the desire for recognition. Intersubjective interactions are also discussed in the second part of SPS, "Objective Spirit,"³ but here the focus is on intersubjective interactions as economic activity

for the purpose of satisfying the mutual needs of the participants. As is true of the concepts discussed in the first part (names, memory, labor, tools, family, family-property), aside from the concept of will, the concepts discussed in the second part are familiar from the earlier Jena writings (recognition, labor, tools, value, money, property, marriage, contract, personhood, honor, crime, punishment, law). The third part ("Constitution") contains another new element not found in the earlier Jena texts – the concept of absolute Spirit as "constitution." This part of SPS addresses the inadequacies of the social institutions that were described in the second part ("Objective Spirit"), and presents an alternative account, wherein the individual acts, qua individual, not merely to fulfill needs, but on the basis of universal motivations. In effect, this stage in the process of Spirit's actualization is no different from that of the "people" in the earlier works, that is, the stage of the universal-particular, but here, in SPS, Hegel's account of the actualization of the universal-particular is more comprehensive, extending beyond the sphere of political life to encompass the realms of art, religion, and philosophy.

2 Intelligence and will

One of the most obvious differences between the first and second series of "Philosophy of Spirit" lectures is the appearance, in the first part of the second series (SPS), of the concept of "will" (*Willen*). But the need for this new concept is not evident at the outset of SPS, and emerges only after an attempt to explain the development of consciousness in epistemic terms.

The process that will generate the institution of the legal person who has rights and responsibilities starts out from a description of the human being's fundamental and unmediated relationship with the world: the ability to take in sensory information from the outside – from that which is outside oneself. But upon awareness of a gap between subject and object, this initial sensory receptiveness to the world is supplanted by *cognition* of the world. The initial unmediated relationship between subject and object is now mediated by images, by representations. Direct, non-cognitive experience of objects becomes mediated cognition of objects: the cognizing subject no longer experiences the object itself, but only a representation of it, that is, only its image. The act of cognition is an act of negation, of negating the object that was formerly given directly. Instead, "intuitions" are given in sense perception.

Spirit, that is, the I, Hegel informs us, is the capacity to negate the independent existence of objects:

Spirit (*Geist*) [i.e., mind] starts from this Being and [then] posits it within itself as something that is a not-being, as something in general sublated (*aufgehobnes*). In so doing, Spirit [mind] is the representational power of imagination (*vorstellende Einbildungskraft*) as such. It is the Self against itself. At first, Spirit itself is intuition; it places itself in opposition to this Self. The *object* [i.e. the external thing] is not its object now, but rather its own intuition, i.e., the content of the perception as its own [content].⁴

This gap between subject and object is not the familiar distinction posited by philosophers between the cognizing subject and the cognized object, which are deemed to be separate entities. For at this point in the process Hegel is describing, there is no conscious separateness, no separateness that results from an act of reflection on the part of the subject, an act that creates a distinction between the subject and the subject's image of the object. As yet, there is no such act. Rather, the initial act of negation results in objectification of the I itself as an image, a picture that is intuited. Hegel's claim that the object is not yet distinct from the cognizing subject is anchored in his notion of Spirit.

Spirit, having externalized itself as something in the world, "returns to itself" from this externalization, but does not, at this first stage in the emergence of consciousness, identify itself as the cognizing consciousness, but only as an image that is distinct from the perceived external object. The duality of this account – on the one hand, it describes Spirit, yet on the other, it describes the cognizing subject – later becomes less central to the description of the emergence of the I, when Spirit's self-description is presented as completely identical to the description of the I's development. But at the present early stage of Hegel's account, where Spirit has not yet been identified with the self principle, it is indeed important, since it allows Hegel to show how the I, the cognizing subject, is generated as an object distinct from the cognized object. This first stage, when Spirit "overcomes" its simple, unaware, unmediated experience of the world by an act of negation, is part of the advance of Spirit toward its full "self-return," as Hegel puts it – its return from separateness to a state of complete unity and self-knowledge – but is also a stage in the prehistory of the cognizing subject. The earliest I is thus identified with the notion of the image, that which is represented by the imagination.

In other words, prior to the stage where the subject gains the capacity to know – to organize, remember and associate images, and, in acts of reflection, to grasp those images as ascribed to itself, thereby becoming its own object – there is a stage where the cognizing subject, also described as Spirit, does not exist as an object of its own reflection, but only as an image of an object. Hegel describes this early stage, from the perspective of Spirit, as follows:

In the looking, Spirit is the image. For it, insofar as it is consciousness, [the object] is a being that is severed from the I. For us, however, it is the unity of both [i.e., its independent being and the I]. It becomes clear to Spirit that it [i.e., Spirit itself] is in and for itself (*an und für sich*) – but to begin with, in the looking, Spirit is only in itself. It complements this [being-in-itself] with the for-itself, with negativity, separation from the in-itself, and goes back into itself. It takes its first self as an object, i.e., the *image*, *Being as mine*, as negated (*als aufgehobnes*).⁵

But Hegel also describes this stage from the perspective of the cognizing subject, as follows:

The image is unconscious, i.e., it is not displayed as an object for representation. The human being is this Night, this empty nothing which contains everything in its simplicity – a wealth of infinitely many representations, images, none of which occur to it directly, and none of which are not present. This [is] the Night, the interior of [human] nature, existing here – pure Self – [and] in phantasmagoric representations it is night everywhere.⁶

Despite Hegel's wildly metaphorical language, there seems to be a marked similarity between Hegel's point of departure in SPS and the empiricist outlook. The I, or consciousness, takes in a manifold of impressions, storing them in its inner space. As long as one is unaware of that manifold, as long as one does not engage in reflection, there is no organizing principle which can change that undifferentiated manifold, that "night," into a manageable manifold within which connections can be made between different images, and distinctions and contrasts drawn. There is, in short, no way to distinguish between the passive reception of an infinitude of discrete and unconnected impressions, and the active arrangement of such a manifold. In a brief, dense discussion, Hegel seeks to describe the constitution of theoretical consciousness, and

its development from an initial state of unmediated reception of sensory input, through imagination, memory, assigning and organizing names, and language, to thought (*Denken*), understanding (*Verstand*), and, finally, reason (*Vernunft*). Hegel's exposition of the transitions between these stages is quite similar to his account in the first "Philosophy of Spirit" lecture series, FPS. What must be stressed, however, is the Spirit-consciousness duality, and the fact that the I, or consciousness, is the principle that illuminates the "night" of the undifferentiated manifold of impressions, and in doing so, itself becomes an object.

The most important point made in this part of SPS, i.e., "Spirit according to its Concept," a point that distinguishes Hegel's view from both empiricism and idealism, is that the constitution of theoretical consciousness takes place together with its objectification. The I is not just a logical condition or organizing principle, but is itself an object, or to put it differently, it is the subject that, in an act of reflection, knows itself as an object. This objectification of the I, of consciousness, is accomplished via re-constitution of the external world that was negated in the course of its internalization and transformation into images. In this re-constitution, self-consciousness imparts objective status to the internalized external world.

During this process of reconstructing the world as subject-dependent, the subject, too, is constituted as objective. Yet in constructing a coherent, subject-dependent world, Hegel's goal is actually to demonstrate the impossibility of a world whose constitution is purely intellectual, and hence the necessity of invoking will. As in similar contexts in the earlier Jena writings, Hegel carries out this demonstration by showing that an internal contradiction mandates sublating one principle and replacing it with another. And again, as in those works, Hegel "establishes" that an internal contradiction exists by arguing that the individual engendered by the existing principle is incomplete and unbalanced. The individual is alienated from a certain dimension of her being, alienation that can only be alleviated by re-introducing that dimension into her life.

Specifically, the individual constituted solely by cognition lacks the complementary dimension of praxis. Purely cognitive constitution necessarily leads to internal contradiction, to collapse of the constituted entity. Why is this so? Here, as elsewhere, we must invoke Hegel's premise that completeness is desirable, and fragmentation undesirable, or in another formulation, the complete is true, the partial, false. The shift in Hegel's exposition can only be understood on the basis of this implicit premise.

The objectification of the I is carried out by the I's efforts to impart objectivity to the reality that was internalized and negated in acts of intuition. External objects are now dependent on the I. One of the stages in the re-constitution of the "external" object is that of naming. The capacity to name things confers on the internalized and re-constituted object that is now within the I renewed separateness from the I. Language confers a certain independence on the object that was negated by the initial cognitive act of intuiting. (As we saw above, the cognizing subject, in experiencing, not the external object itself, but only a representation of it, negates the external object.) Granted, this independence is not equivalent to its original independence prior to being intuited, but independence in the sense of separateness from the cognizing I.⁷

This is *language*, as the name-giving power. The power of imagination provides only the empty form; [it is] the designative power positing the form as internal. Language, on the other hand, posits the internal as *being* (*seyendes*)...

...It is only a name, in a higher sense, since to begin with, the name is itself only the very superficial *spiritual being*. By means of the name, however, the object has been born out of the I [and has emerged] as *being* (*seyend*).⁸

The I is not only the capacity to name, and thereby objectify impressions, that is, to create objects from them, but also to organize names into a network of laws that give expression to the fixed relations between them.⁹ Indeed, as this organizing principle, as a fixed template that is applied in diverse circumstances, the I manifests a key feature of objecthood – permanence and invariability – and is itself objectified. Hegel refers to this stage in the development of human cognition as "memory."¹⁰

In essence, the role Hegel assigns to the objectification of the I is similar to that of Kant's formal logic and forms of judgment (categories) vis-à-vis experience. Hegel does not invoke the idea of formal logic in his description of the permanent "infrastructure" that makes knowledge possible, but takes the I to be the source of the fixedness of the categories that generate and shape our knowledge of the world. That which, in the Kantian system, was effected via formal logic, as a fixed and complete system of unchanging laws, is effected in SPS by the I as object, the objectified I. Hegel uses the notion of objectification in two senses. On the one hand, it refers to that which renders something juxtaposed

to the I, that is, renders it an object (*Gegenstand*). The I confronts and cognitively processes the object, which exists independently. In addition, he uses the notion in an epistemic sense, to denote that which has been rendered permanent, universal, and unchanging.

As I said, Hegel refers to this stage in the development of human cognition, where the I organizes and objectifies the images it has named, as “memory.” Prior to the emergence of memory, the relations between words are not themselves the object of thought. Memory, however, allows reflection to occur, and the I to identify itself as an object, as an organizational mechanism distinct from that which is being organized. “In memory this arbitrariness is what disappears first – the I has come into *being*. The name is [now] a fixed sign, a permanent relation, universal.”¹¹

It is at the stage of memory that the I becomes an object of its own cognitional activity, a content of consciousness. But this content is separate from the active, cognizing I that gave rise to it, and, indeed, completely independent of that I. In being objectified, it is externalized, rendered “outside” the I. That is, since it is impossible to distinguish within the I, as it were, between the I qua organizational system that has itself as its object of scrutiny, its subject-matter, and the I as that object, the I externalizes and objectifies itself as an object, an object that is indifferent to the process that produced it.

At this point in Hegel’s description of the unfolding of consciousness, we can discern an important inversion. What began as a process of internalization and negation of the outside world has become a process of re-externalization of that internalized world, but now that outside world features a subject. In place of the gap between the self and the world, there is identity. The I has become the object of the cognitional process we described, and the object, which was initially juxtaposed to it, has become part of the cognizing subject.¹² Yet this inversion, with each side adopting the other’s characterization, thereby generating identity between subject and object, is problematic, in blurring the significant differences between the two. It will therefore now be necessary to find a new description on which, without forgoing the inversion, the two can be distinguished.

Hegel describes the problem of this identity between discernibles – namely, the I and its object – as follows:

Thus the I is active in connection with the *thing* or with universality as such, i.e., the movement of the universal is posited. The difference between the two [I and the thing] is that the I is differentiated from

itself – it is the universal to which it is opposed as the negativity which it itself contains.¹³

Originally, negation characterized the I as an individual consciousness, and universality characterized external objects before they were perceived by us. But now, as a result of its objectification, the I, the individual consciousness, is characterized by universality, whereas the object is characterized by the singularity imparted by negation, since the re-constituted object is created anew by each consciousness. The opposition between universal and individual seems to have dissolved, there now apparently being no criterion to distinguish between them. Are we to draw the conclusion that there is, indeed, no true distinction between the I and its object, or is the contrary conclusion correct, namely, that the inversion-generated, apparently total, identity between self and object is not what it seems, and does, in fact, permit differentiation?

Hegel's answer is clear: identity of opposites, of discernibles, is indeed possible, provided we assume a third, mediating entity, a mediating substrate. The idea of a medium that generates unity between opposites is, of course, far from new. We encountered it in the first "Philosophy of Spirit" lectures, where consciousness was characterized as a "middle." But in 1805 Hegel first proposes adopting the structure of the syllogism (*Schluss*) as the mediative mechanism. His idea is that the conclusion of a syllogism that has two opposed premises will be a third entity through which – and only through which – the apparent contradiction between the discernibles featured in the premises can be overcome. I will not explore this idea, which Hegel develops in his *Logic*, here, beyond pointing out that this move introduces the possibility of the identity of discernibles, and, in our context, the possibility of the universal-particular.

As we will see, this possibility enables Hegel to offer an account of the creation of the person, the legal persona recognized by the law, as a mediating entity that allows the individual to exist as universal while at the same time allowing the universal to be particularized. The difference between the syllogism and the legal person is that to which they are juxtaposed. The legal person confronts, not just external objects, but subjects as well. Yet despite the structural similarity between the syllogism whose premises are opposed and the act of mediation, in terms of content there is no similarity, and Hegel's idea mandates a new understanding of mediation. This new conception of mediation is not entirely unfamiliar: Hegel invokes the struggle for mutual self-recognition as

the mediative mechanism operative in the development of human cognition.

The emergence of cognition has thus disclosed a structural similitude, or even identity, between the I and the world, an identity that might be accepted by a philosopher such as Spinoza, but is highly problematic for a philosopher, such as Hegel, who seeks to demonstrate that there is an essential distinction between the two, without thereby having to relinquish the I's existence in the world and confine the I to a self-constituted image of the world. For Hegel, the relationship between the individual and society is analogous to that between the I and the world. The process that, according to Hegel, ultimately generates the free individual, first requires the individual's identity to be reduced to that of the collective of which he is part. Forging a free existence appears to mandate detaching oneself from this framework, and creating an altogether separate identity, yet as the individual gradually learns, this separate identity cannot, in fact, be achieved in a vacuum. Paradoxically, the individual in search of autonomy must find a mediative mechanism that will allow for construction of autonomous individuality within the collective.

This constraint in turn necessitates the theoretical possibility of identifying discernibles, that is, the possibility of the universal-particular. The posited structural parallel seems less far-fetched if we recall that the "Philosophy of Spirit" lectures are intended to describe the development of human consciousness, in the course of which there is movement from a state of undifferentiated unity to one of fragmentation, which is ultimately succeeded by restored unity comprised of differentiated individuals who retain their individuality. This emphasis on the theoretical question of the possibility of the universal-particular in the emergence of consciousness is, as is true of the Jena writings in general, intended to advance a non-theoretical agenda: the socio-political issue of alienation.

The notion of a mediative space within which unity of distinct – and incompatible – elements can be achieved highlights a striking parallel between the mechanism underlying the identity of discernibles and the process of overcoming alienation. Hegel describes the said unity arrived at via a mediating "middle," or "third," as follows:

Both are therefore universal, and only one is the Universal. They are *beings* (*seyende*), and yet they are not identical in this *being* (*Seyn*): the one sort of being is the inner, the in-itself of the other, and they are negative. Their unity is itself something other than

both extremities, since they are opposed to one another; yet their juxtaposition is such that precisely in that respect wherein they are juxtaposed they are identical. ... Yet precisely in their unity and their mutual opposition they are related to one another; and in that both are other than this unity, this otherness is their middle term which relates them. The conclusion is therefore posited: insofar as the two extremes are opposed they are one in some third element; and insofar as they are identical, it is precisely their opposition, that which divides them (*das sie dirimirende*), that is the [unifying] third element.

This third element, however, is such that it is everything the other two are.¹⁴

Comparing this description of the space mediating between the I as negation, as individuality, and the object, as universality, with solutions, encountered in earlier Jena writings, to the problem of differentiating individuals within the totality – primarily, the concepts of absolute ethical life and the people – makes it very clear that there is a thorough-going correspondence between these various conceptual structures. But as it is still early in our description of SPS's account of the development of cognition, it would be best if we defer this conclusion until we have examined the later developmental stages.

Hegel identifies the unifying third "element," or what I have called the mediative space, with the most mature phase of the development of Spirit as a cognitive capacity, as theoretical consciousness, that is, reason. In other words, reason is that unity, described as consciousness thinking itself. Consciousness relates to itself, but this is not the sterile self-relation of empty identity, of the I reflecting on itself, but rather, consciousness knows itself in its differentiatedness, its otherness. This otherness is not something independent of consciousness, but it is consciousness itself. The self-differentiation of theoretical consciousness, as both subject and object, leads to a closed, self-contained system, a totality within which the self-relationship is at the same time a relationship to that which is other. Theoretical consciousness, or to use Hegel's term, "consciousness as intelligence," is consciousness whose sole object of knowledge is itself. Thus the I's knowledge of the world is knowledge of itself, and the I is released from the direct, but passive, encounter with the world with which the process being recounted in SPS began. But a significant price is exacted for this release from dependence on that which is directly given, i.e., on sensory input.

Since, for the individual consciousness, the only meaning that exists is self-generated, the I is imprisoned in a space without independent

content, content that is not filtered through the I itself. Relinquishing unmediated dependence on the sensory manifold generated the freedom to organize and re-constitute the world as one's own, but doing so deprived it of content, since the manifold is now known solely through the prism of the I. This state of affairs must be corrected, Hegel avers, by consciousness's returning to the world and regaining its freedom to know, not by negating and re-constituting the world, but rather by laboring in it and engaging with its objects. This return to the world is carried out by the I as will.

This intelligence is free, yet its freedom is, on the other hand, without content, at whose cost and loss it has freed itself. Its movement is the opposite: to fulfill itself – not through passive absorption, but through the creation of a content wherein the intelligence has the consciousness of its own activity, i.e., as its own positing of content or making itself its own content.¹⁵

3 Will

The transition from “intelligence” to “will” can be understood in different ways. It could be argued that construing consciousness as a cognitive capacity yields a coherent but ultimately inadequate account of the constitution and objectification of consciousness. A more satisfactory account would require relinquishing the premise that the constitution of consciousness begins with passive receipt of input from the world, and adoption of an activist model on which the I is constituted by an act of will, and specifically, by the I's attempt to determine itself as an object. This account of the transition to will can be expressed more radically, as follows. Will is the primary drive. It seeks to determine *itself* as an object that it can recognize as cognition, as the I, as self-consciousness. Underlying this explanation of the transition from “intelligence” to “will” is the assumption that the cognition-based account of the emergence of consciousness is incompatible with the will-based account. It assumes that the cognition-based account led to an impasse, inasmuch as it leaves the I imprisoned in a self-generated world, a world where no independent knowledge is possible. Hegel thus has no choice, on this reading of the transition, but to start over, so to speak, and provide another account of the emergence of consciousness, which he proceeds to do in the section on “Will.”

A second possibility is to view the cognition-based account of the emergence of consciousness as complementing the will-based account. On this approach, the cognition-based account is indeed inadequate,

and must be supplemented by a praxis-based account, an account that focuses on how the individual copes in the world. What was missing from the cognitive account, and is indeed a central theme in the section of SPS on "will," is a discussion of intersubjective dependence, which, as we will see, Hegel presents as the chief condition for constitution of the I as an object. For the self-constitution of the I as an object depends not only on the given-ness of the sensory manifold, but also on the given-ness of another cognizing subject, another consciousness, a subject Hegel takes to be "derivable" only via the theoretical will. The cognition-based account of the objectification of the I is deficient insofar as the subject-object knows itself as distinct from other objects, but not as distinct from other subject-objects. If Hegel seeks to provide an account of the constitution of the legal person, then clearly, a significant aspect of the objectification of such a person is its being known by, and interacting with, other subjects, other I's.

On the basis of the text, it would seem that the second explanation for the transition from "intelligence" to "will" best reflects Hegel's thinking, as is attested by the opening sentence of "Objective Spirit," which declares: "Spirit is actual neither as intelligence nor as will, but as will which is intelligence."¹⁶ The I is an organic unity of cognition and praxis, the I that knows and the I that acts; the I that knows is the I that acts.

Yet the section on "Will" challenges this ostensibly unequivocal determination, for in it Hegel seems to present will, as the individual's practical relation to the world, as a *precondition* for cognition, for knowing the world. Not only is cognition insufficient, on its own, to constitute consciousness, it is also a later stage in the constitutive process, being dependent on praxis. It is only as a result of our engaging with the world by acting on objects that we begin to make the distinctions and categorizations that enable us to know the world. On this view, the account presented in the "Will" section of "Spirit according to its Concept" presents a set of necessary conditions for cognition, which Hegel addressed in the section that preceded it, "Intelligence." According to Hegel, only in acting on the world, in negating something in order to satisfy a need (e.g., in eating or in making objects), can one arrive, by engaging in reflection, at the idea of a stored mental image as negating the external object that generated it.¹⁷

Further textual corroboration of this reading is found in the fact that the "Will" section does not start out from the result of the preceding section ("Intelligence"), namely, the objectified I created by the process of cognition, but rather presents anew, in terms of will and drive, the

project of objectifying the I. In “Will” Hegel abandons the developmental presentation he used in “Intelligence” – the transition to volition does not mark a new developmental stage in the constitution of the I, the need for which was demonstrated by the argument in “Intelligence.” He begins afresh, taking volition (which, unlike cognition, is introduced as full-fledged and not in need of a developmental exposition) as his starting point. Hegel does not tackle this mission by supplementing the discussion in the preceding section (“Intelligence”) with an account of intersubjective relations, but offers a full and complex treatment of volition’s constitution of the I. He will argue that the I is constituted by the will, both theoretically and practically. Furthermore, the main concepts he uses to explicate this process – labor and tools – are not invoked simply to describe actions undertaken to satisfy needs, but rather, are the means by which the I is constituted.

Yet this does not mean that the cognitive account of the constitution of consciousness has been discounted. On the contrary, it is validated by the new account. Taken together, the two accounts offer a complete picture of the active, cognizing I. The cognitional account, *ab initio*, plays a role in justifying its volitional counterpart, but after the fact we see that it is itself justified by the latter.

To summarize, the cognitional and volitional accounts are neither incompatible alternatives, nor simply complementary. Rather, the first account – the developmental argument in “Intelligence” – is a critical treatment of cognition, a treatment that, having demonstrated the need for an alternative account, will subsequently be integrated into that account – the volitional account. This explains the order of Hegel’s presentation, that is, explains why the account of the “preconditions” for cognition follows rather than precedes the discussion of cognition.

Let us now turn to Hegel’s account of volition, beginning with its characterization. “Volition [simply] *wills*, i.e., it wants to posit itself [assert itself], make itself, as itself, its own object.”¹⁸ That which wills seeks to determine itself – and to do so by itself, as its own object. This rather clumsy rubric, with which the section opens, is intended to convey that the will is complete, self-contained, and bears a reflexive relation to itself. As is generally the case with Hegelian definitions, that which is described as self-reflexive, as applying to itself, or in Hegelian language, as an indistinguishable identity, is deemed to be free and independent, but at the same time, abstract and vacuous. To surmount this vacuity, Hegel endeavors to find an insufficiency within this closed volitional system that can initiate the process of actualizing the totality of possibilities that is contained within it. Hegel therefore asserts, in the

sentence following the one just quoted, that that which wills, viz., the self-contained volitional system, has the following structure:

It is free, but this freedom is the empty, the formal – the evil. It is in itself determined (*beschlossen*) – it is the termination [*Schluss*: literally, “conclusion”] in itself. [It has these aspects:] (a) it is the universal, purpose; (b) it is the particular, the Self, activity, actuality; (c) it is the middle [term] of both these, the drive.¹⁹

Hegel is suggesting that consciousness, as a universal-particular, be construed, not in terms of structure (intelligence as a system of categories; a priori conditions for the identity of the cognizing subject, etc.), but in terms of drive, of inclination to act. In effect, he is laying a new foundation for the constitution of consciousness.²⁰ Hegel once again uses his preferred mode of presenting his argument: he begins by offering a theoretical account of will, then without explicitly stating that he is moving on to a new stage in the argument, proceeds to explore how the concept of will is actualized. The theoretical discussion clarifies that the concept of drive is crucial to explaining the actualization – the objectification – of volition.

At the outset, drive is described as a content-less category that is merely a formal possibility for mediating between the purpose that the will seeks to achieve, and the active I seeking to achieve that purpose. But drive, as a concept, not only mediates between will's two aspects, but also has its own essence, an essence that can be actualized only by breaking through the self-contained volitional system and seeking its own satisfaction.²¹ The attempt to satisfy the drive solely as a self-relation, without breaking through the self-contained system, creates a sense of dissatisfaction that necessarily leads to an attempt, on the part of the as-yet not-fully-constituted will, to satisfy the drive by turning to the world to which it is juxtaposed, but from which it has, being fully self-contained, thus far been utterly separate.²² Hegel summarizes the complicated process as follows:

The main point is the content of the object. The object separates itself from its drive, thereby acquiring a different form – the quiescent drive, become itself, fulfilled in itself. The lack was in the looking of the empty I – for this was object to itself. It held the differences of the “conclusion” together; it comprised their equivalence, their subsistence, not being as such; it was the primary immediate I, but I as such. The drive having been separated from the I, it is released from the Self – the bare content held together by its *being*.²³

Up to this point, Hegel's description calls to mind the situation at the end of the section on "Intelligence": as we saw, the self-differentiation of theoretical consciousness into both subject and object led to a closed system, with the I imprisoned in a content-less space. But as soon as Hegel begins to discuss the I's objectification and externalization in terms of will, what seems to be a fairly similar account is shown to be very different. The I is the product of labor: it is the actualized content of the formerly unsatisfied drive, which, not satisfied with self-reflection as to the fact that it desires a specific object, seeks actualization outside itself (outside consciousness), requiring it to act, to do something. As drive, consciousness does something it can recognize as the product of its own labor, and in doing so, contributes to constitution of the I.

The work of the I: it knows its activity in this, i.e., knows itself as the I, heretofore [hidden] in the interior of being. [It knows itself] as activity (not as in memory), but rather so that the content as such is [revealed] through it; this is because the distinction as such was its own. The distinction makes up the content, and that alone is what is important here – that the I has posited the distinction out of itself and knows it as its own.²⁴

If we now reflect on Hegel's account of will thus far, it becomes clear that in starting out from willing, Hegel is already presupposing something that wills, a willing being (*Wollende*), an I that wills. The structure of the will reflects the I as active subject, as desiring, as yearning: in willing, the I is actualized. In essence, this is hardly different from the cognizing subject with which Hegel ended the section on "intelligence." But this picture, on which the I is a complete being, endowed with the capacity to desire, may not be altogether accurate, since it is to some degree the I's experiences as wanting, as being driven, that bring about the will's self-constitution as an object, and thereby impart objective status to the I, as the will's object. This duality in the process of objectification – on the one hand, what is objectified is the I that wills, but on the other, what is objectified is the product of the act of willing – raises a key question about Hegel's account. Does the I determine what the will attains, or does the will determine what the I desires? Is there a separate I that, by actualizing its drives and thereby externalizing itself as will, objectifies the product of acts of willing, or is there some very early, very elemental instinct, in the course of whose objectification the I is constituted as subject-object?

A comprehensive answer to this interpretive question cannot be provided here,²⁵ but on the basis of the continuation of the SPS account

of will, I would argue that Hegel upholds the second option. Given the developmental nature of Hegel's exposition of the genesis of the legal person, it must be assumed that the I is initially abstract and non-actualized; it is merely a theoretical principle. But it is a principle that *entails its own actualization*. After considering, in "Intelligence," various ways to arrive at this sort of necessary self-implicature, Hegel concludes that it can arise only through the concept of "drive," which, as he explicates it, inherently connotes insistence on its realization. In other words, drive that does not urgently seek fulfillment is not really drive. This demand for actualization generates the I's outward propulsion, as it were, movement which then actualizes the active subject.

But it is by no means the case that any satisfaction of an urge fulfils the conditions for the constitution of the active I, that is, for the emergence of consciousness's self-identity. Satisfaction of a momentary urge, or an internal urge that has no outward expression, cannot serve as the basis for self-identity, because in such an act this identity is not conscious. When the casual act of satisfying a drive is not conscious, when I do not identify it as my action, it is indeed an act of self-externalization, but one that negates itself once the action has been carried out. Only at the stage when actions are conscious, when acts of labor create objects, and later, when tools are forged, is the I's identity as an active subject sustained.

The bare activity is pure mediation, movement; the bare satisfaction of desire is the pure extinction of the object. The *labor* itself as such is not only activity – the acid [which dissolves passivity] – but it is also reflected in-itself.²⁶

The progression from labor to tools is the unfolding of the subject's instrumental relationship with the world, as a mode of the actualization and objectification of the I. As in the earlier Jena writings, Hegel describes this progression as reflecting the processes of assimilation into the world and liberation from this assimilation via renewed differentiation and step-by-step construction of the I's "connected" (as there can be no independence in isolation from the world) independence. Yet this entire process is intended to demonstrate the instrumental attitude's inadequacy as an expression of the active I's identity, and the necessity of moving on to intersubjective relations if that identity is to be fully expressed.

Honneth, among others, makes this claim.²⁷ He argues that the instrumental analysis of the will's development is obviously inadequate,

since subjective Spirit's self-knowledge – that is, the active subject's self-knowledge, through the products of her labor – is limited to its modes of adapting to its natural environment. But, keeping in mind that the goal of the instrumental progression is to explain subjective Spirit's subsequent concrete embodiment in the legal person, this sort of knowledge is

far from sufficient for development of a consciousness of itself as a legal person. For acquiring that sort of self-understanding would require, in addition, at least that it learn to comprehend itself as an intersubjective being existing alongside persons with competing claims. Hence, if the constitution of individual consciousness of right is to be explained, the formative process of subjective Spirit needs to be extended along a further dimension of the practical relation to the world. It is this that Hegel now seeks to find in an initial form of mutual recognition.²⁸

This argument that instrumental relationships cannot generate adequate development of the I is thus based on the putative goal of the process of Spirit's development at this point in SPS, namely, emergence of the legal person. Only in light of this goal, which Hegel maintains can be achieved solely through intersubjective interaction, is the said insufficiency manifest. Hegel has been critiqued for presenting the instrumental progression, and then abandoning it in favor of an alternative account that leads directly to the emergence of the legal person, or at least the citizen with rights and responsibilities.

But in simply *assuming* this connection between the goal – emergence of the legal person – and the instrumental process in question, the critics have not explored other possible justifications for exposition of the theoretical aspects of the as-yet-unactualized subject, or considered it apart from its contribution to reaching that goal. If, however, we do examine the process on its own, it becomes apparent that the objectification of the subject through labor, through its instrumental relationship to the world, undermines the possibility of the subject's actualization even without regard to the issue of its intersubjective relations. To put it differently, even if we are speaking of one single individual, one consciousness, we would not put forward the claim that its labor, its engagement with objects for the purpose of satisfying drives, exhausts its human potential, and there is nothing beyond this instrumental relation with the world. For will, which, qua drive, actualizes itself through labor, embodies the need for self-objectification that

releases consciousness from internal imprisonment. But this objectification must not be absolute: consciousness must retain its subjecthood, even in its complete externalization, its becoming an object. Hegel still wants reflexivity – self-relatedness – to remain an essential characteristic of subjecthood.

When the development of consciousness is purely instrumental, reflexivity not only loses its centrality, but seems to fade away altogether. Objectification of the I is accompanied by a concomitant loss of reflexivity. Early in the process, we saw, objectification has yet to emerge, since the urges being satisfied are only momentary, and there is no awareness of self. Only at the stage when conscious acts of labor are carried out on objects with permanence do the products of that labor generate a sustained I that can relate to itself. For in identifying something as the product of my labor, I am directly attributing its existence to myself, to my acts. Tool-use, however, reduces that connection, since although the tool is indeed a product of labor, it has an aspect of generality: it expresses a general concept (e.g., using a crowbar expresses the law of the lever), it can be transferred to others, it expresses a principle of action, and at the same time, it does not necessarily express an aspect of my relationship to myself. Tool-use thus represents a distancing from the immediate. Nevertheless, when I use a tool to create something, I am building – albeit indirectly – a self-relationship that is mediated by the product of the labor that the tool enables me to carry out.

Upon the transition to tools that are self-running (Hegel gives the windmill as an example), to modes of production that sever this direct connection to the products of my labor, a gap opens up between those products and the capacity to be self-reflexive. This leads to absolute objectification of the I, which becomes an object, and thus a subject that lacks the key trait of reflexivity. In light of this explanation of what Hegel is trying to accomplish in the section on “Will,” it could be argued that the inadequacy of the instrumental stages in the development of consciousness does not, in fact, rest on the premise that intersubjectivity is the goal, and that this inadequacy can be established even without this premise. Hegel’s exposition of the instrumental stages in the development of consciousness is a critique of the increasing loss of self-reflexiveness. In sustaining this loss of the capacity to connect with objects, to see them as identifiably related to oneself in a meaningful way, one also loses the capacity to determine oneself without reducing oneself to pure subjectivity, or to objecthood that cannot act in the world.

This unsatisfactory progression of the I as will impels Hegel to consider the relationship between the sexes. His rationale for this move, this transition from analysis of the last phase of the instrumental relationship with the world, that of self-running tools, to analysis of male–female relations, comes across as quite strange, if not patently absurd. Through self-running tools, consciousness’s cunning, its ability to exploit the forces of nature for its own purposes, is revealed. Hegel asserts that due to the “equivalence” between the feminine and consciousness as cunning, cunning feminizes will: “Through cunning, the will becomes feminine.”²⁹ From this purported equivalence, Hegel proceeds to derive a “split” in volition, which is “doubled, split in two” – that is, divided into a masculine component and a feminine component. The interactions between these components will serve as the means of overcoming the inadequacy of the instrumental connection to the world.³⁰

Because he wants to frame his account in terms of will and the satisfaction of drives, Hegel does not adduce intersubjective relations in general, but confines the discussion to male–female relationships. The actualization of will as the drive to act on an object, we must remember, is intended as an alternative account of our interaction with objects, an account that sets out the conditions that enable cognition. In invoking the relationship between the sexes, Hegel’s broader goal is to use will, via drive, to anchor the individual’s need for self-recognition through other individuals. This goal could not be achieved via cognition, which, as we saw above, imprisoned consciousness within itself. Moreover, this inability to achieve self-awareness was also the fundamental flaw in the active will’s earlier experiences in the world, which progressively reduced the scope for reflexivity. Hegel’s recourse to gender differences thus reflects his search for a mechanism that can propel consciousness beyond its own orbit and enable it to acquire self-understanding.

Hegel construes the relations between the sexes as a mode of acquiring knowledge, specifically, self-knowledge through someone else. Drive, in the form of mutual desire, leads to fulfillment of the Hegelian desideratum of mutual recognition: satisfaction of one’s own drives by satisfying someone else’s drives. Mutual satisfaction of needs does more than simply allow each individual to meet her needs; its primary effect is to affirm the individual’s self-understanding and self-regard. This restored self-relationship in turn provides a means of overcoming both the subject’s imprisonment in an interior world, and the radical objectification that ensued from the subject’s instrumental engagement with the

world. Hegel describes this process whereby mutual satisfaction of drives generates self-knowledge, as follows:

(a) The drive comes to look at itself – it returns to itself in that satisfaction. In the same manner, it has become *knowledge* of what it is. ... The drive is outside itself, in the other simple Self, and knows the Self as an independent extreme. At the same time this knowledge knows its essence in the other. There is tension in the drive, the independence of both extremes.

(b) In itself there is the supersession (*Aufheben*) of both: each [of the two “selves”] is identical to the other precisely in that wherein it opposes it; the other, that whereby it is the “other” to it, is it itself.³¹

At the beginning of his account of the male–female relationship, Hegel stresses, not the intimacy and affection that develop when two individuals build a shared life, but the fact that the first interpersonal, the first truly human relationship, seeks to achieve goals very similar to those of the preceding stages in the unfolding of consciousness, where consciousness interacts with objects in the world. But at the present stage, due to the unique nature of the human “object” – woman – the outcome is different, and the goal of achieving self-knowledge via the other is achieved. Through its interaction with another human being, consciousness comes to know itself as an independent subject. Consciousness becomes self-reflexive, self-conscious. Hegel reiterates the claim that awareness of one’s identity emerges at this initial stage of the male–female relationship.

Since, however, the natural relations that arise from fulfilling sexual needs are instrumental, they are, at this stage, devoid of social significance. According to Hegel’s account, self-consciousness, the distinction between the I and the other, should be formulated, not epistemically, but naturalistically, viz., in terms of natural impulses that yield self-knowledge. Our relationship with the world is not solely epistemic, as the reflective philosophy of subjectivity contends.

Hegel begins his account of this stage in the development of consciousness as he did at the earlier stages, and in his other Jena writings, namely, by first sketching an abstract conceptual framework, and afterwards discussing its instantiation. He begins by describing direct and unmediated mutual satisfaction of the sexual impulse conceptually, in terms of the fundamental dynamic, already familiar, of seeking in someone else recognition of one’s self. He then proceeds to offer a

more nuanced account of the sexual relationship as self-knowledge, via another consciousness, that is embodied in love. A further refinement externalizes the love relationship, and presents it as manifested in the sharing of family property. Hegel presents his argument in a way that underscores the ethical and teleological dimensions of the process. He begins his account of the emergence of interpersonal relations – which ultimately hold the key to the overcoming of alienation – from the sexual relationship, because he takes it to presuppose asymmetry. This asymmetry will impel the process forward in an effort to construct a balanced, domination-free male–female relationship.

Hegel describes the male as the active party, the embodiment of drive, whereas the female is passive: “The male has desire, drive; the feminine drive is far more aimed at being the object of drive, to excite, to arouse drive and to allow it to satisfy itself in it.”³² Love is the attempt to surmount this asymmetry. It is described, on the one hand, as the male capacity to re-position itself as the passive, giving party, rather than the active, taking party. But on the other, it is described as the space where the woman discovers herself as active, as demanding that her desire be gratified. The move from an asymmetrical relationship, a relationship built on a power imbalance, to a relationship based on mutual recognition and dependence, illustrates yet again the teleological nature of Hegel’s argumentation. The outcome of constituting, not just the legal person, but the individual who is fully integrated into a society free of alienation and fragmentation, guides Hegel’s account of gender relations, just as it guides the entire process of the constitution of consciousness.³³ In love, Hegel asserts, the male–female power imbalance is superseded by an elementary sort of cooperation, where each side is willing to act in a manner that enables the other to fulfill its needs, unlike the natural relationship, where each side used the other without any consideration of its needs. In love, each side seeks to satisfy the other.

Yet this cooperativeness is not, Hegel stresses, motivated by altruistic concern or empathy for the other, but rather, by the desire for self-determination. Each side surrenders its independence, its desire to use the other merely to satisfy its needs, in order to be recognized as an autonomous individual. Each side has grasped that if it does not recognize the independence of the other, from whom it seeks recognition, it will be unable to actualize its own independence, or will not be able to do so as an individual whose self-definition extends beyond the capacity to have instrumental relationships with objects. Discovery of this fact, as a result of having experienced natural (instrumental) male–female relations, is a matter of natural necessity, not a moral insight.

At the level of love, a kind of natural coercion impels us to satisfy our sexual drive, but this natural necessity goes far beyond simple satisfaction of the momentary natural impulse. The individual's natural urge to satisfy his sexual desire presupposes the existence of "another," who similarly has intent and desire, since only by attributing this trait to the "other" can the individual's own intent/desire be satisfied. The stage of love plays a decisive role in the genesis of the legal person: it marks the beginning of the transition from nature to culture. Granted, the instrumental attitude to the natural world, the world of objects, is not necessarily prior to satisfaction of the sexual drive in the genesis of the legal person, and the converse may well be the case. But it is only in terms of the instrumentality of the natural sexual relationship that we can describe the evolution of the sexual relationship in a manner that explains the emergence of a precondition for culture, namely, the understanding, based on reflection, that satisfying one's inclinations invariably calls for relinquishing some of them, that is, requires cooperation.

The unique feature of Hegel's account of the ascent from nature to culture is that it is formulated in terms of volition. Using volition makes possible an account that does not sever the individual from her natural existence, and explains the emergence of cooperation, mutual recognition, and cultivation of the capacity to limit and restrain natural drives out of a desire to satisfy the "other" as a means of attaining one's own satisfaction. In a footnote, Hegel adds that love is the rudimentary principle of ethical life: "It is the element of [custom or morality], the totality of ethical life (*Sittlichkeit*) – though not yet it itself, but only the suggestion of it."³⁴ This dictum expresses the insight that the cooperation that is an integral part of the love relationship is fundamentally different from the cooperation needed in the earlier stages in the development of consciousness, especially the instrumental stage. In labor, in creating tools, simple or self-running, a modicum of cooperation between individuals is needed – labor and tools would be meaningless if we did not assume the existence of social interaction beyond that which took place in the originary natural state.

Hegel is drawing a sharp distinction between this quasi-cooperation that surely exists at the stage of instrumental relations, and the cooperation characteristic of love relationships: the former does not mandate mutual recognition, whereas the latter does. Individuals working on a shared task might well coordinate and manage their various inclinations in order to meet a certain goal, without this necessitating, conceptually speaking, that they recognize each other's claim to be an

autonomous individual. But it is only when each individual demands to be recognized by those with whom he is interacting, a demand the legitimacy of which is acknowledged by all, that the necessary condition for the emergence of ethical life has been met. In other words, mutual recognition is the dividing line between nature and culture, the point that marks the emergence of the first real social community, a community that upholds a code of normative conduct. Love, as the first instance of a relationship based on mutual recognition, is, Hegel notes, only an approximation of what will subsequently be deemed ethical life. And the individual within such a relationship is not yet the legal person Hegel intends to constitute, but only a “natural individual.”³⁵

This characterization indicates not only that Hegel upholds a nature–culture continuum, but more importantly, that he intends to offer a justification for our ethical norms that differs from the Kantian or the utilitarian – a naturalistic sort of justification. If indeed the ethical impulse arises directly from natural existence, from the experience of loving and being loved, from our actualizing the desire for recognition by being responsive to our lover’s desire for the same, then Hegel has derived a rational justification for ethics from natural human conduct rather than, as Kant does, from reason.

This reading is explicitly endorsed by Wildt, who argues that in adducing mutual recognition, manifested in the love relationship, and its ethical consequences, Hegel is attempting to offer a rational justification for ethics that does not ignore the particular existence of the individual, and seeks to derive the said justification from the natural experiences of the active I – the I characterized by volition.³⁶ What is special about the second series of “Philosophy of Spirit” lectures is the attempt to go beyond justifying ethics as rational general laws by invoking a theory of volition. Not volition as a rational principle, as per Kant, but volition as the drive to act. According to Wildt, Hegel’s description of the development of Spirit is an attempt to offer a justification for ethics that is couched, not in terms of general laws, but in terms of individual actions.

Honneth offers a different reading of Hegel’s claim that love is an initial approximation of ethical life. He takes it to mean that love is a necessary condition, a necessary experience the individual must have, if she is to be ready for existence within a social context. Honneth diverts the discussion from the justification of ethics to the question of how the individual is to be integrated into an ethical community whose values are predetermined.

If, however, the two above-mentioned formulations [of the claim that love, by suggesting “the ideal in the actual,” is a foundational element of ethical life – P.I.] from the *Realphilosophie* are put in positive terms, they provide significant insights into the function that love, as a relationship of recognition, is supposed to have in the subject's formative process. In our context, to speak of ‘love’ as an ‘element’ of ethical life can only mean that, for every subject, the experience of being loved constitutes a necessary precondition for participation in the public life of a community.³⁷

Honneth's defense of this interpretation is largely psychological. Being loved – gaining recognition by affirmation of the individual's demand that her needs be met – is an experience that develops the individual's basic self-confidence, without which she would lack the capacity to stand up for herself and hold her own against the multitude of opposed individuals who would demand of her – as she indeed demands of them – that she cooperate in satisfying their needs. The experience of being loved, or loving, is an element of the individual will's preparation for its union with the wills of individuals who have contrary desires, and for building a general will that can unite the opposed desires. In short, it is necessary preparation for the individual ahead of the anticipated constitution of the social framework of the “people” (*Volk*).

Honneth emphasizes that Hegel's claim that love is just a first approximation of, but not identical to, ethical life, reflects his desire to divorce himself from the view he had expressed in the early theological works and writings from the Frankfurt period. On that view, love itself was a force that could integrate opposed forces and inclination. While acknowledging that love was not a suitable model for the social relationships within large groups of individuals, Hegel did not completely discard that model. Rather, he repurposed it, now taking it to set out a necessary precondition for constituting ethical life.

Yet in focusing on the unsuitability of love as a model for large-scale social relations, Honneth seems to downplay the role of love as a model for surmounting fragmentation and alienation, a model Hegel seeks to retain in the constitution of ethical life. The role Hegel earmarks for love, for the capacity to see oneself in the other, is not limited to *preparing* the individual for life in a community, but extends to communal existence itself. As Honneth says, Hegel does make a clear distinction between male–female intersubjective “integration” – the love relationship – on the one hand, and the individual's integration into society, on the other.

But Honneth does not give due weight to the fact that Hegel's account of love emphasizes not only the internal emotional bond it generates in the lovers, but more importantly, the degree to which it enables them to be united while each maintains his autonomy.

As we saw, the instrumental attitude to the world was an inadequate relationship inasmuch as it left no room for reflexivity; love is intended to redress this failing. It is the first stage of consciousness that suggests the possibility of the coexistence of unity and separateness. Hegel deems it an approximation of ethical life precisely because it offers the first inkling, the first glimpse of the conceptual structure that is consistent with the notion of union that preserves difference.

Moreover, neither Honneth nor Wildt note, in the present context, that the love relationship, at least in its ideal form, is free of domination relations. When Hegel began searching for an alternative to positive, authoritarian religion, he felt that the religion of love would be able to sustain a bond based on tradition and authority without descending into an oppressive relationship where one side had absolute power over the other, which had to submit to its edicts. One reason the earlier stages in SPS's description of the development of Spirit were deemed in need of sublation was that they entailed domination and unequal power vis-à-vis both the individual's relation to nature and gender relations. Indeed, the transition from one stage to another is impelled by a desire to eliminate these power imbalances. That love is free of such domination or, to use the Hegelian term, lordship relations is central to Hegel's determination that love is a first approximation of ethical life.

Let us return to the thesis, put forward by Wildt and others, that the idea of love reflects an attempt on Hegel's part to provide a justification for ethics. This claim is important in that it seeks to situate Hegel's project under a well-circumscribed rubric that has, since the Enlightenment, defined the very enterprise of moral philosophy.³⁸ Wildt seeks to reconstruct Hegel's argument in such a way that his critique of this project will not place him outside it, but rather render him one of its leading exponents.³⁹

The modern project of providing a rational justification for ethics rests on two fundamental principles that define, by elimination, the possibilities for such a justification. The first is that the justification cannot be theological. It is no longer possible to appeal to God, or to the tenets of any religious faith, as a source of rational justification for ethics. The second principle is that the justification cannot be framed in terms of teleological principles of any kind. No longer is it possible to justify the morality of an act by describing it as actualizing the essence of a moral

agent. We cannot, in other words, revert to Aristotelian arguments, and any attempt to do so undermines the very enterprise of seeking a rational justification of ethics that is compelling to the modern mind. If we accept that premise that Hegel subscribed to these principles, it follows that Hegel was willing to work within the parameters of the project as described by Wildt and others.

But it is not difficult to demonstrate that Hegel unequivocally rejects the second principle, and, on some interpretations of his view, the first as well. For the central pillar of Hegel's account of the constitution of Spirit is theological. The constitutive process, in all its various forms and versions, is presented as an unfolding progression, albeit in the form of a spiral rather than a straight line, wherein Spirit, after alienating and externalizing itself, proceeds to actualize itself and reveal its true essence. Indeed, it would be difficult to conceive an argument more committed to the teleological approach than that presented in the "Philosophy of Spirit" lectures. Even if we disregard the constitution of Spirit as a narrative framework recounting the unfolding of a process with a prescribed endpoint, and focus solely on the descriptions of specific institutions (language, memory, labor, love, etc.), it is difficult to formulate Hegel's thesis in a manner that is compatible with the second constraint. For as we saw, the entire process is goal-oriented, and the goal not only determines its ultimate result, but also explains the transitions from one stage to the next. We just saw, for instance, that it guides his account of gender relations. Love and what it represents for Hegel are a first approximation of Hegel's broader project, namely, finding a model of ethical life that can sustain difference within unity, autonomy within community, cooperation without domination, and thus avert alienation. And love is that model, in an incipient form.

Hegel can be critiqued for persisting in the use of teleological arguments, and there are indeed problems associated with the notion of rationality implicit in such arguments. One such problem is that of conditioning the description of the unfolding of a given phenomenon on its future outcome, rendering that outcome predetermined. This casts doubt on the independence of the allegedly necessary transitions that lead to that goal/outcome. While this sort of external critique of the validity of teleological arguments is certainly legitimate, it provides no grounds for denying that Hegel put forward such arguments. Critique of the arguments themselves has often been voiced, and rightly so, but this does not mean that Hegel has a place within the project of offering a rational justification for ethics, as that concept was understood by Kant, Fichte, or even Hume and utilitarians such as Bentham and Mill. We

cannot conclude from this, of course, that Hegel maintains that there is no possibility of that type of rational justification for ethics, and on this point, Wildt is certainly right. But we must admit that Hegel chooses to use a mode of justification that distances him, in principle, from the model of rational justification that Wildt and others are determined to force on him.

For as we have seen, all Hegel's Jena writings attempt to formulate a *different* model of rational justification, a model anchored in a purposive program with a well-defined goal. The model that crystallizes in the end blends the structure of a purposive argument in the Aristotelian vein with the terminology of the transcendental philosophy of Hegel's day. This unique synthesis of the Aristotelian and transcendentalist traditions gave rise to some ambiguity, leaving an opening for intense interpretive discussion as to the weight of each tradition within Hegel's overall thinking as to the constitution of Spirit. Surveying his writings on the matter, I find it difficult to avoid the conclusion that Hegel represents a revival of the Aristotelian approach, but in a manner that integrates it with elements of the contemporary cultural space, and thereby radically changes its substance.

Moreover, adoption of the Aristotelian mode of argumentation allows Hegel to tackle a problem he takes to have been generated by the kind of Kantian argumentation Wildt seeks to impose on him. Hegel, we saw, takes the problem of alienation, of the existential situation where the individual experiences a sense of isolation from her cultural milieu, to have been generated by philosophy in the subjectivist key. The problem of alienation makes it imperative to conduct a meaningful narrative about the circumstances that engendered that fragmentation, and how it can be overcome. If the problem that motivates the Hegelian project is understood in this way, it becomes clear why teleological argumentation is an appropriate methodology. In adopting this methodology, Hegel undoubtedly created a disconnect between himself and the philosophical tradition that was already being forged in his day, and has since become dominant, a tradition suspicious of teleological arguments. Nevertheless, Hegel's embrace of the teleological approach, and consequent break with the philosophy of his day, was not only deliberate, but in large measure defined the Hegelian project.⁴⁰

It is important to stress that Hegel did not reject every element of the Enlightenment ethos, but accepted those aspects that were compatible with the basic goal of his pursuit of philosophy, namely, overcoming alienation. The complexity of Hegel's relationship with the Enlightenment tradition is manifest in the fact that he does not flatly

reject the first principle, viz., the principle that a rational justification for ethics cannot be theological. But because he accepts teleological reasoning, it is important for him to clarify that this acceptance does not entail endorsement of theological justifications for ethics. This compels us to offer a more nuanced distinction between ethics and religion. It is clear, however, that Hegel's philosophical project diverges considerably from the pursuit of a rational justification for ethics in the Kantian–Fichtean sense.

The key Hegelian insight Wildt embraces as an enhancement of the Kantian stance is, however, indeed the pivotal point that gives Hegel's project its special resonance: a theoretical justification of ethics, however abstract it might be, need not be divorced from concrete human activity.

Hegel gives us an unequivocal description of intersubjective interaction once the life-and-death struggle for recognition has been abandoned.⁴¹ These individuals are now fully cognizant of both their individuality, and their dependence on each other. This recognition of their mutual dependence is manifested in the cooperative implementation of a system of rights and obligations, with which Hegel ends the first part of SPS, "Spirit according to its Concept":

This knowing will is now *universal*. It is the state of *being recognized*; juxtaposed to itself in the form of universality, it is being, actuality in general – and the individual, the subject, is the *person*. The will of the individual is the universal will – and the universal is the individual. It is the totality of ethical life (*Sittlichkeit*) in general, immediate, yet [as] Right.⁴²

4 Objective Spirit

In the literature, the following picture of the transition from "Spirit according to its Concept" to "Objective Spirit" (*Objectiv Geist*) is pervasive, almost unanimous. Thus far, Hegel has offered a description of the state of nature, and how it is overcome – the progression by which we are able to leave the natural state and enter into an existence that is institutionalized. Hegel's account, though fundamentally different from that of the social contract theorists, nonetheless engages with the same basic question that engaged the contract theorists, namely, explanation of the emergence and development of law and order, of governance. Both Hegel and the contract theorists seek to offer a justification for the constitution of civil society which provides law and order by imposing

a system of rights and obligations. In the context of this project, Hegel's theoretical, hypothetical account of the struggle for mutual recognition plays a role akin to that played, in social contract theory, by "the war of all against all." In light of the overall goal of this endeavor, in Part 2, "Objective Spirit," Hegel proceeds to concretize his position, by presenting the argument made in Part I ("Spirit according to its Concept") in terms of "actual" or "objective" Spirit.

Textual support for this picture of the transition from "Spirit according to its Concept" to "Objective Spirit" can be found in the passage just quoted. First, note the phrase "the knowing will," with which the passage opens.⁴³ On the one hand, the will, whose vicissitudes we have described, is not yet actualized, but still just will as concept. But on the other, tremendous progress was made in Part I of SPS: the individual will has been liberated from the limitations of its unmediated natural existence, and become conscious will that can distinguish itself, by a process of mutual recognition, from other conscious wills. This development serves as a theoretical justification for society as a self-conscious institution forged by self-aware individuals, hence Hegel must now proceed with the task of setting forth a concrete, "actualized" description of this society.

The end of the passage offers, it is claimed, further textual support for this picture. Hegel says that at this point in the unfolding of consciousness, "immediate" ethical life has emerged. This is the Hegelian way of saying that the ethical life that has been attained thus far is abstract and conceptual, but not actual. Yet this stage will necessarily, according to Hegel, lead to the next stage in the Hegelian narrative schema, where this abstraction will be externalized and thereby concretized. The operative sphere of "ethical life" is the public sphere, the realm of the universal will, often referred to as the general will, which emerged as a result of the conceptual constitution of the "person," the Hegelian idiom for the legal person with rights and obligations. What is missing, however, is a concrete *institutional* expression of this public sphere that developed further upon the struggle for recognition and introduction of a regimen of rights and obligations.

Virtually all the commentators are in agreement as to this account of the transition from the first part of SPS, "Spirit according to its Concept," to the second, "Objective Spirit." Honneth, for instance, asserts:

For this, of course, the mere principle of legal relations thus far considered does not provide an adequate foundation, since, as such, it leaves completely undecided what rights the subject actually has.... [it is

open, to a certain extent, in which respect and to what degree legal persons have to recognize each other reciprocally.] For this reason, in the second chapter of his 'Philosophy of Spirit,' he reconstructs the development of social reality as a formative process, through which the substantive meaning of these abstract relations of legal recognition gradually expands.⁴⁴

The appeal of this account of the transition to "Objective Spirit" is clear: it situates Hegel squarely within a framework that distinguishes clearly between description and justification of civil society. Yet this distinction, however attractive, is not, in fact, consistent with either the Hegelian text itself, or with Hegel's general approach to explanation. Indeed, Hegel's model of explanation completely rejects any clear-cut distinction between description and justification. To begin with, the division between the two parts of SPS, with the first allegedly dealing with "concepts" whereas the second deals with "actualization," can by no means serve as a ground for the said differentiation, given that, as we saw, the transition from "Intelligence" to "Will," which is recounted in Part 1, is described in the very same terms, namely, it is described as the externalization and actualization of consciousness's abstract cognitive capacity, and will itself is described as actualized in drive. Thus the alleged transition from concept to actualization does not take place between Parts 1 and 2, as the received interpretation claims, but is already well underway in the so-called abstract and conceptual discussion in Part 1. Of course, it might be claimed that there is a significant difference between the actualization/externalization recounted in Part 1, and that of Part 2.

Moreover, we saw above that the relationship between the two sections of Part 1, "Intelligence" and "Will," is far from straightforward: it is debatable whether the accounts of consciousness's development presented in these sections complement each other, or the will-based account is intended as an *alternative* to the cognitional account. The same two options are relevant here too: a quick survey of "Objective Spirit" reveals that most of the concepts it discusses have already been discussed in "Will" – labor, property, family, and so on. Accepting the thesis that the analysis in Part 1 is abstract leads to the insufficiently nuanced and inaccurate conclusion that the discussion of the said concepts in "Will," in the course of describing the development of the active I, is abstract. But concrete human engagement with nature, which constitutes the instrumental relationship with the world expounded in "Will," is hardly abstract. Even its early pre-reflexive phase was surely

actual, and as to the later phases, what could be less abstract than the concrete realization of male–female love in the begetting of a child?

The attempt to frame the difference between the concretization in the case of love, and indeed, the entire externalization process as described in Part 1, and that which is recounted in Part 2, cannot, therefore, be carried out solely on the basis of the “actualization” criterion, which does not supply a tenable distinction between them. In particular, it does not suffice to frame the transition between “Spirit according to its Concept” and “Objective Spirit” in terms of concretization of the struggle for mutual recognition. As will become clear from analysis of “Objective Spirit,” Hegel continues to adduce both the abstract and the actual, as he did in “Spirit according to its Concept.” We must therefore investigate why Hegel deems it necessary to introduce a separate conceptual framework, “Objective Spirit,” to describe the coming stages in the ongoing process of the actualization and objectification of consciousness, including the struggle for recognition.

Though the text does not provide an unequivocal answer, close scrutiny reveals that in Part 2 Hegel is offering an account parallel to that of Part 1, but from a starting point that is significantly different.⁴⁵ The ensuing descriptions are not completely dissimilar, having the theme of Spirit in common; they also share the broader goal of harmonious, unfragmented unity. As we saw, Part 1 began by positing a non-self-aware individual who was basically continuous with nature. Part 2 begins by positing a large group of mutually-dependent individuals. Their interdependence arises from satisfying reciprocal needs on the basis of a division of labor, allowing everyone’s needs to be met. Labor is no longer the simple engagement with natural entities that, in Part 1, as well as the earlier Jena works, generated the individual’s subjectivity, her sense of self, but rather expresses cooperation between multiple individuals. In short, Hegel begins Part 2 by assuming Adam Smith’s account of human social behavior, invoking it, explicitly or implicitly, as the starting point for depiction of the dynamics of civil society, the externalized manifestation of objective Spirit. This account will make clear the inadequacy of a society grounded in mutual fulfillment of needs, and the need to create a society that aspires to ethical life. In terms of their conclusions, then, “Spirit according to its Concept” and “Objective Spirit” are fully in accord.

The structure of “Objective Spirit” reinforces my contention that its argument is a parallel version of that presented in “Spirit according to its Concept,” as opposed to a continuation of it. For Hegel begins, as he does in most of the Jena writings, with a theoretical determination that

is subsequently fleshed out with an objectified, externalized account. He declares that the legal person is a unity of intelligence and will, and assumes that the context within which the individual acts is collective. The individual, the legal person who is recognized by others, is the fundamental building block of civil society, whose dynamics "Objective Spirit" is about to expound.

Being-recognized (*Anerkanntseyn*) is immediate actuality. And in this element [there is] the person, at first as being-for-himself in general, working and enjoying [the fruits of labor]. Only here does desire have the right to make its appearance – for [here] it is actual; i.e., desire itself has universal, spiritual being. Labor is of all and for all, and the enjoyment [of its fruits] is enjoyment by all. Each [one] serves the other and provides help. Only here does the individual have existence, as individual. Prior to this, the individual is merely something abstract, untrue.⁴⁶

Hegel says little more than this by way of introduction, proceeding directly to his exposition of the individual in the societal context. His argument, however, is quite similar to that of the third part of SEL, and I will discuss it only briefly. The chief difference is that the interacting individuals with whom he begins his exposition do not exist in the conceptual realm of natural ethics, as in SEL, but rather, in the realm of law. This shift is significant, and points to an emerging feature of Hegel's thought in the later Jena period: emphasis on legal institutions in his exposition of intermediate stages of human development. Hegel's focus in "Objective Spirit," will be, as it was in SEL's treatment of natural ethical life, labor and its transformations. He proceeds from a concrete description to an abstract analysis of the process of labor's concretization, beginning with the value imparted to the product of the labor, money, and exchange (which creates property), and ending with contract. Hegel sees contract as the culmination of the process of actualization by means of which the individual recovers the individuality and separateness she lost in the course of labor's increasing abstractness and division into units ever more remote from her needs. What is different in the SPS account of this process is that it unfolds on two parallel but inverse tracks: what is described is not just the evolution of labor via the institutions of tools, money, possession, etc., but also, through these institutions, the evolution – more specifically, the increasing concretization – of the mutual recognition underlying the system of reciprocal satisfaction of needs. This parallel track is new, and was not found in

the account in SEL, which approached mutual recognition in terms of its relation to crime and anti-social behavior.

As we saw, Hegel begins his account with the declaration that, prior to interacting with others, “the individual is merely something abstract, untrue.” The interaction is engendered by mutual satisfaction of needs. Given the multiplicity of needs that must be satisfied, individuals, relying on the assumption that their own needs will be satisfied by others, “specialize” in satisfying specific needs. But this specialization exacts a heavy price: the individual loses that which labor had hitherto given him, namely, self-actualization. For the individual labors to make products that are supplied to the general market, and satisfy the needs of others. She repeatedly performs the labors that yield the product or product part in which she specializes, till the acts in question become completely mechanical and repetitive, or in Hegelian parlance, “abstract.”⁴⁷ In being divided, labor ceases to fulfill the role it had previously played in the individual’s life.⁴⁸ If labor is to be restored to its pre-mechanization function, to its role prior to having been rendered abstract, the individual must find a new way to fulfill the need that was satisfied by his recourse to labor – the need for a sense of the self as an autonomous individual. And she finds that new mode of satisfying the need for self-concretization in property, in identifying certain items as belonging to her, as her own.

The actualization of the idea that something belongs to me is the ability to exchange it for something else that I am in need of. But as is always the case in the Hegelian dialectic, this path to restoring the self-concretization that was lost due to the division of labor does not entail renouncing the preceding stage, but rather introduction of a new concept that preserves certain aspects of that stage. Specifically, it preserves the *universality* of the division of labor. This new concept is “value,” which expresses that abstract universality, and is itself concretized in exchange:

Value is what is universal [here]; the movement, as perceptible, is the exchange. This same universality is mediation as conscious movement. Property is thus an immediate having, mediated through being-recognized. That is, its existence is [shaping, recollection, value] – it is the spiritual essence.

Here the contingency in taking possession is overcome (*aufgehoben*). All that I have, I have through work and exchange, i.e., in being recognized.⁴⁹

Possession and exchange restore the lost subjective sense of being recognized as a unique individual. Yet this renewed affirmation will not last, for it too will be lost in yet another process of abstraction, when exchange is rendered abstract by being transformed into "contract." Granted, in being recognized as able and willing to exchange something, the individual is acknowledged.⁵⁰ But this putative restoration also blurs the distinction between the individual and the universal situation by virtue of which he is recognized. Contract rectifies this, in serving as a mediative device that re-constitutes the individual's separateness and wishes in face of the wishes of the individuals with whom he is interacting.

The complexity of Hegel's analysis is noteworthy. The intersubjective interaction that takes place in the context of exchange indeed creates the concrete actual situation that once again (as labor had prior to its mechanization) affirms the individual's distinctiveness. But it cannot provide the institutional context needed to support that social interaction, e.g., in the case of conflict. Such support mandates introduction of contract, with its explicit expression of the agreements and conditions implicit in the act of exchange. Hegel makes this point in stating that contract is exactly like exchange, except that it is an ideal form of exchange.⁵¹ The significance of this determination is, however, that the individual is yet again severed from her concrete reality (which, in "exchange," was manifest in the physical item being traded), which is supplanted by the universal expression of contractual agreement.

Paradoxically, then, contract is necessary if the individual is to actualize, in a stable and reliable way, that which he has achieved in the act of exchange, namely, recognition of his separateness and intrinsic worth, but implementation of the contractual regime silences the individual will, replacing it with a generic substitute. The social institution of contract, though intended as an expression of joint agreement that captures and preserves each individual's wishes, fails to do so, for it engenders alienation between the individual's existence as a legal person – the dimension of the individual that is obligated by the contract – and her "inner" wishes qua active agent. Hegel describes this as a split between the universal will, which recognizes the existence of the individual qua legal person, and the will of the active individual:

Here, however, this division appears, that can as readily change into its opposite: the going back into itself [as individual will opposed to the will that is shared]. The will as such has validity; it is set free of

actuality. But in that very fact there is the opposite: individual and shared wills are separated; the individual will [appears] as the negative of the universal will.⁵²

How is the individual to restore the internal unity lost due to the framework of contract? By breaking the contract! For breach of contract mandates a response that does not merely affirm the individual qua universal will, viz., qua legal person, but rather engenders renewed recognition of the complete and active individual. Breach of contract reinforces Hegel's analysis of contractual relations and their shortcomings. Failure to comply with a contractual obligation confirms my non-existence qua actual within the contractual framework, since the other party to the contract does not recognize or relate to me at all, but only to my obligation to fulfill my end of the contract. Breaking the contract enables the individual to establish the autonomy of her will, not as an abstract determination, but as actual.

But the negation embodied in breach of contract does not achieve this positive goal, but only radicalizes the very state of affairs that the act sought to overcome. The situation of the individual who seeks to transcend the one-sidedness of her characterization as a legal person, from the reduction of her existential significance to a single abstract and universal aspect, is described by Hegel as a state that is forced on her, that she cannot succeed in extricating herself from. In response, the individual endeavors to affirm her individuality by breaking the contract, but discovers that others do not relate to her as a singular, full and autonomous individual, but as an individual only to the extent that she is part of the general will.

In order really to assert the difference, I break the contract. The other party recognized my nonexistent will and was satisfied with it. The fact that it did not exist, that nothing was done [by me], should indeed have been overcome (*aufgehoben*) – an *ought*, but he recognized the ought.⁵³

This focus on the universal, that is, on the shared element of the individual's universal identity – her legal personhood and capacity to take on obligations – generates a sense in the individual that she, in all her uniqueness, is not respected. As an autonomous individual, her honor is offended when a universal identity is forced upon her: "The person, the pure being-for-himself, thus is not respected as an individual will separating itself from the shared will, but only as that shared will."⁵⁴ By

recognizing only one aspect of her existence, and negating the others, in effect the contract negates her being in its entirety:

This is the force of the contract....I was compelled as person – for in this negation of my [particular] existence, my [universal] being in general was negated (*negiert*) as well, since these are indivisible.⁵⁵

It is against the background of this analysis of contractual relations that Hegel segues into the issue of crime and punishment. This transition can be approached from two angles: from the perspective of the individual who seeks, yet again, recognition of his singularity, and from the perspective of the general will, the consensus that, by way of enforcement, imparts binding validity to joint agreements. Hegel, however, does not distinguish between these perspectives, and shifts from one to the other, intent on moving the dialectical process forward to the point where the individual will can be absorbed into the general will, obviating any need for coercion, as the general will, at that point, will have developed the ability to sustain delicate distinctions of nuance, making space for each individual will's separate and distinct expression.

From the first perspective, that of the individual, crime is a deliberate provocation for the purpose of confronting the general will and forcing it to acknowledge the particularity of the individual will. The individual grasps that the contractual situation minimizes his many facets, and realizes that the contractual regime, in effect, splits him into individual I and universal I. This realization, together with the fact that her initial reaction to not being recognized as a unique individual – breaking the contract – was ignored and failed to elicit the desired response, is an affront to her honor. Offended, the individual is impelled to commit a crime. This crime is not carried out due to some natural inclination to wreak havoc, but rather in the context of legal personhood: the perpetrator is a legal person with rights and obligations. Hegel situates the struggle for honor and recognition at the stage where the demand for recognition is not motivated by the individual's desire to be recognized in his universality (as it was when, e.g., exchange was generalized as contract), but on the contrary, to be recognized as having the particularity and singularity that was lost because the contractual regime recognized him only as an expression of the universal.

His inner justification is...[his wish] to count for something, to be recognized. He wants to be something (like Herostratus), not necessarily to be famous but only to have *his* will prevail, in opposition to the universal will.⁵⁶

From the other perspective, that of the general will, which amounts to that of the law, the individual's provocation plays a positive role: it rouses the general will to action, galvanizing its transformation from abstract principle to actualized coercive, i.e., punitive, power. The general will's initial response to the breach of contract was purely legal and impersonal, and exposed the fact that it did not understand the individual's motivation for this infringement. Crime obligates the general will to acknowledge the individual's demand that her singularity be recognized, and in combating crime, the general will, by restoring society's violated and breached integrity, restores the individual's status as singular and complete. This result, it should be stressed, is indirect, because in resorting to coercion, or to be more precise, punishment, the general will is, first and foremost, confirming *its own* actual existence, and it is only by virtue of this self-assertion on the part of the general will that the individual receives the recognition she demands.

Hegel's account of this process, that is, of the genesis of crime, and society's response to it, does not, as noted above, systematically distinguish between these perspectives, or between its direct and its indirect results. It shifts between describing things from the perspective of the individual consciousness, and that of the impersonal law, the general will. This duality is apparent from each of the two vantage points. From the perspective of the individual, who acts in defense of his independence and uniqueness, crime demonstrates that the desired autonomous existence is only possible in a society characterized by full integration of its members, all of whom recognize each other. And from the perspective of the general will, which was pressed into actualizing itself to validate its binding authority, into concrete awareness of its role as societal "glue," crime demonstrates that it is the general will itself that provides the recognition enabling the individual to achieve self-determination. In the unfolding of consciousness, the transition from the stage of contract to that of crime can be understood only when viewed from a God's-eye perspective, or in Hegelian language, as a complete and synchronous movement, with no "earlier" and no "later":

Through this movement, the being-recognized has been realized, presented as:

- (a) comprising in itself the determinate existence and the particular will; in the surrender of itself to maintain itself in its expression, retaining its will;
- (b) this will as such, as the individual will, as the will existing in the contract; return into particularity, crime as though this [individual will] were [the will] as such, crime [as] loss of the particularity

of being through the universal will; the reconciled universal will, counting absolutely as such [this is the] deterrent to crime: looking upon the law as the absolute power, not the power of the individual.⁵⁷

In seeking affirmation of his singularity and uniqueness, the individual has severed himself from the anchor of "objectivity," from the attempt to actualize himself through institutions such as family, labor, tools, exchange, etc. This adventure, which not only failed to yield the desired affirmation, but reduced the individual's standing even further, ends – at this stage in the dialectic process – in the individual's complete subjugation to the law's coercive force. The process seems to end in the individual's complete submission, not in the individual's finally achieving complete freedom and autonomy. As we are about to see, Hegel asserts, at the beginning of the next part, that this sought-after state has indeed been achieved. But he has not explained how it is that the law, having been actualized as an absolute power by the individual's defiance, serves as the objective anchor for the individual's self-determination as an autonomous subject. He has shown that crime enables the individual to overcome the alienation generated by the abstractness of the relationships countenanced by the contractual framework, but this progress is short-lived, since the law, concretized as punishment, immediately steps in and overturns that assertion of autonomous individuality. Nowhere does Hegel explain why the recognition that ensues from punishment does not extinguish the punishee's individuality altogether, or enlarge the divide between the individual's universality, qua legal person, and her essential particularity. Nowhere does he explain how the "integration" into the universal that is forced on the individual by punishment generates awareness, in the individual, that self-determination can only be achieved by identifying with the general will. Obedience out of fear of punishment will only lead to resentment and alienation, not identification with the law. The logic of Hegel's overall account of the development of consciousness would seem to imply that the individual must come to recognize that self-determination can only be achieved by surrendering oneself to the law, assimilating into the totality whose will it expresses, and willingly accepting its constraints, but this is not shown.

In the "Objective Spirit" portion of SPS, Hegel apparently seeks to demonstrate the possibility of achieving the said recognition, integration, and internal wholeness, in terms of civil society with the duly constituted authority to enforce rights and obligations, as opposed to

framing that possibility only in terms of a life-and-death struggle, as he did in SEL. Although the SPS account of the struggle for mutual recognition does speak of a life-and-death struggle,⁵⁸ Hegel does not emphasize this mechanism as he did in SEL and FPS. Moreover, whereas in the earlier Jena writings, the individual's assimilation into an absolute entity, the "people," served as the mechanism allowing for affirmation of the individual without life-and-death struggle, in SPS, the individual submits, not to the people, but to the law. Yet disconcertingly, at this point in his exposition of the development of consciousness, this submission entails total loss of freedom and autonomy.

In discussing crime and punishment, Hegel is not speaking of an aberrant path taken only by the criminal few, but of a stage that plays an edifying role in the constitution of individual self-determination. Indeed, the discussion begins by stressing that some values are more important than those embodied in contract: "Concerning my honor and life there can be no contract."⁵⁹ This being so, the outcome, namely, forced submission to the law, seems to have achieved, not restoration of the self-affirmation undermined by contract, but the very opposite: self-abnegation and forced assimilation, forced capitulation to the general will.⁶⁰

5 Constitution and absolute Spirit

At the beginning of the third part of SPS, "Constitution," Hegel summarizes what has been achieved thus far:

Thus this Spirit is the absolute power everywhere, which lives in itself and now must give itself this view of itself as such, i.e., to make itself its own end (*Zweck*). As force it is only the individual who is the end, i.e., the abstraction of the individual. The Spirit's self-preservation, however, is the *organization* of its life, the spirit of a people, a spirit that intends itself. The concept of Spirit: *universality in the complete freedom and independence of the individual*.⁶¹

This unequivocal declaration that Spirit manifests itself in the individual's complete freedom and independence hardly seems justified on the strength of Hegel's account of crime and punishment. As we saw, though the crime/punishment dynamic offers the individual a mechanism for achieving a modicum of recognition, the price is too high: total submission to the law and loss of autonomy. It may be that the declaration reflects, not the discussion of crime/punishment, but the

analysis of "law" that follows Hegel's treatment of punishment. And it is also possible that Hegel has simply assumed the desired starting point for his exposition of the harmonious society and its institutions. The account of law, however, does not offer any guidance that might soften or compensate for the abstract, alienating aspects of the law through social institutions that embody sensitivity to individuality and the human need for recognition. By emulating familial relationships based on solidarity and love, such institutions would pre-empt recourse to anti-social conduct – contract infringement, crime, rebellion against the social consensus – as a means of attaining recognition. For in his account of how familiar social institutions such as marriage and property are transformed by law's externalization and actualization in institutions based on the imposition of legal sanctions, there is no hint of such an "individual-friendly" tendency. Hegel's account of law makes clear that Hegel does not take the recognition of individuality and acknowledgement of affronts to self-respect to be an ethical imperative, a constraint on any adequate social institution. Rather, he presents the quest for recognition as an explanation for movement from one phase to another in the development of objective Spirit. Recall the duality of Hegel's exposition of crime and punishment. Our expectation that the process will end in the restoration of the individual's sense of self reflects adoption of our own perspective – that of the individual. But the declaration with which Hegel opens "Constitution," the third and final part of SPS, is presented from the perspective of Spirit.

This dual perspective may explain why Hegel ignores the normative imperative, but does not obviate the need for a complementary account, *from the individual perspective*, describing the process by which the individual achieves the desired self-determination through the mediation of social institutions that respond to and rectify the failure of the preceding processes of objectification (family, property, contract, crime/punishment, etc.). Hegel, however, provides no such account, and appears simply to stipulate, to posit, that Spirit's objectification in the form of the state is the concrete institutional expression of individual freedom and independence. The process of concretization of Spirit set in motion by the individual's criminal act culminates in the state's constitution. Hegel does not seek to constitute the state consensually from the bottom up, that is, by social interaction which supplants the contractual regimen, rejecting its blindness to the particular. This obviously does not mean that Hegel cannot supply such a description, only that he has not done so thus far. If his exposition is to be compelling, however, Hegel will indeed have to show that constitution of the state ensues

dialectically from the dynamic initiated by the criminal act, not only from Spirit's universal perspective, but also from the perspective of the individual who seeks affirmation of her individuality. Yet his account of the crime/punishment dynamic, of the individual's violent response to the alienation induced by the impersonality of objectified relationships between legal persons, indeed appears to be invoked merely as an explanatory mechanism to propel the process of Spirit's development toward constitution of the state.

The problem raised by Hegel's exposition of the process of Spirit's constitution is that it has not demonstrated any plausible connection between the earlier stages and the stage where the individual is assumed to have "complete freedom and independence." Instead, at a certain point, after his exposition of crime/punishment or of "law" (in section B of "Objective Spirit"), Hegel halts his narration and simply stipulates, as if it were established fact, that the state is the sole institutional framework within which individuals can be fully self-determining. There thus seems to be a missing link in his exposition of the emergence of the free individual, the self-determining subject with rights and obligations, an account that satisfies the desideratum of harmony between the individual and her surroundings.

There is an ongoing debate in the literature as to this question, which has important implications. The textual question is essentially asking whether Hegel has offered any basis for the transition from a coercive, law-based account of civil society – the picture anchored in the modern, Hobbesian–Kantian outlook – to an ethical social order grounded in the people or the state. That is, does Hegel have a philosophical justification for his socio-political model of ethical life? Put differently, the problem is that unless there is adequate philosophical grounding for the ethical-life model, and it rests entirely on the notion of submission to the law, Hegel has not in fact managed to overcome domination relations, to transcend the lord–bondsperson dynamic, to constitute an individual who is free of internal division and power struggles, and whose inner unity is at one with her surroundings.⁶² He has failed to meet his own standard – recall that in SEL he set out the fundamental principle, which remains a constant in his thought, namely, that unity of the disparate exists when the relation between individual and the universal is that of reciprocal dependence, not subsumption. In short, the society he is so painstakingly constructing will exemplify the very alienation that he diagnosed in modernity and is seeking to overcome.

In light of what is at stake, Habermas and Honneth both try to pinpoint the juncture at which Hegel deviates from his basic idea, and abandons

the “bottom-up” construction of a consensual society based on intersubjective communication, leading to the failure of his alternate vision for modernity.⁶³ Habermas, and in his wake, Honneth, identify as Hegel’s fallacy his having adopted a “monological” model of self-consciousness to describe Spirit, and try to rectify this misstep with a “discourse ethics” model of society.

Siep, however, reaches a diametrically opposed conclusion, and tries to show that the Jena writings, in which Hegel experiments with various formulations of the ethical-life model, ultimately bear fruit in SPS, where Hegel succeeds in both describing and offering a philosophical justification for a model of ethical life wherein the individual is indeed *not* ultimately negated by, or subjected to the domination of, the general will, viz., the will of the people, or its institutional expression, the state.⁶⁴ On the contrary, the individual sees her will as expressing the general will. According to Siep, in SPS, unlike Hegel’s earlier Jena works, law is presented as mediating between the struggle for mutual recognition and the state, which Hegel also calls “the people’s [cultural] spirit” (*Volksgeist*). Law is the sphere within which the individual gains experience in limiting her freedom, and thus the transition to the institutionalized expression of this self-limiting – the state or people – does not represent coercion of the individual or negation of her will.

This point is stressed by Siep, and Habermas and Honneth do not disagree.⁶⁵ Siep notes that upon scrutiny, it is clear that throughout the Jena period Hegel is well aware of the problems raised, from the societal perspective, by the individual’s demand for absolute autonomy. But a satisfactory solution eluded him. He may not have been ready to accept the price it entailed, namely, loss of social solidarity, loss of identification with one’s community. This denial seems to be behind Hegel’s declaration that absolute autonomy can be actualized, in the framework of the people, or its institutional expression, the state, without paying that price. Siep clearly recognizes this, and therefore we must explore why he nonetheless argues that in SPS Hegel finally succeeds in solving the problem. This in turn requires us to revisit the question of mutual recognition.

The roots of the “mutual recognition” rubric can be traced to Fichte’s *Foundations of Natural Right According to the Principles of the Wissenschaftslehre*, where Fichte attempts to derive the concept of natural right. In contrast to the case of deriving the theoretical I as a relationship to that which is “not-I,” the concept of right – which anchors legal relationships – reflects the tension between the I and other I’s. The theory of mutual recognition serves as Fichte’s means of grounding a

shared consciousness of law.⁶⁶ For Fichte's account of law is based on two incompatible premises, a contradiction from which he seeks to extricate himself by invoking his theory of recognition. The first premise is that consciousness is independence that is achieved by negating the other; the second, that consciousness can know itself, can grasp itself as an object, only through that which is other than itself. Self-determination of the individual consciousness thus requires that which it must negate. It is here that Fichte's theory of mutual recognition steps in to resolve the paradox: one consciousness (A) can attain freedom only if another consciousness (B) restricts its own freedom of action. This act of self-restriction can only take place within a specific space, a space created by the consent of the individual who seeks this act (A) to restrict his own freedom so as to create a space for the other (B) to act freely. Within the space created by A's self-restriction of his freedom of action, B acts, thereby determining herself and actualizing her freedom. Yet this very actualization restricts B's own freedom, thereby allowing for A's own self-determination. Each one can freely determine himself, not by negating *the other*, but by *negating his own self-otherness*, that is, by negating his unlimited freedom. In short, resolution of the paradox requires us to understand the interdependence as follows: an individual's freedom can only be recognized through her recognition of someone else's freedom. It is self-restriction of freedom that creates the shared space for law.

Hegel, while critical of Fichte's restriction of the individual's freedom, nonetheless adopts his basic idea of mutual recognition, though radically reinterpreting it on two major points.⁶⁷ First, he does not downplay or soften the notion of negation (*Vernichtung*) of the other, but takes it to mean annihilation. Second, he does not understand this negation as mere self-restriction, but as negation of the other, the not-I. In essence, he seeks to change Fichte's idea of mutual recognition, so that instead of referring to the result of an act I carry out vis-à-vis myself, it refers to an act carried out vis-à-vis the other. The I must see in the other, not simply its own self-limitation, from which its self-determination will ensue, but also its negation of the other. If so, the aforementioned paradox can only be resolved if negation of the other is not simply an expression of my self-negation, but indeed strives to achieve negation of the other. In other words, Hegel recasts Fichte's theory of mutual recognition as a struggle for recognition. This "struggle" model of mutual recognition is more suitable for describing large-scale social interaction, and thus suitable as a basis for exposition of the creation of social institutions.

Yet Hegel's intensification of Fichte's negation of the other very nearly leads to the self-annihilation of the consciousness seeking

self-determination, or its annihilation by the other consciousness, which is equally eager for recognition. Siep does not view Hegel's modification of Fichte's mutual recognition theory as problematic, and understands it as a kind of immanent critique of the Fichtean stance: the radicalization is necessary because Fichte's theory ultimately leads to an impasse, since the condition A imposes for recognition of B can only be satisfied by negating B, whose recognition A requires. To avoid this internal contradiction, the individual must withdraw the demand he makes as an autonomous individual, thereby acknowledging that he and the other share a common identity, and are part of a broader totality. The intensified struggle plays a decisive role in prompting this recognition on the part of the individual, enabling her to grasp her individuality as intrinsically linked to the identity she shares with the other, an identification that is fully achieved in ethical life, the optimal social, political, and economic organization of the people.

According to Siep, the Fichtean background adequately explains Hegel's conviction that the interactions of individuals cannot, in themselves, create a shared space for the law. Given the two constraints that generated Fichte's dilemma – the individual's self-determination must be independent, but externally validated – the ensuing struggle between individuals gives rise to a need for a shared framework that transcends their individual interests. According to Hegel, this space can only be the shared space of ethical life. Siep concurs with this conclusion, arguing that the problem raised by Habermas and Honneth arises because they take the mutual recognition imperative to be the individual's sole focus, whereas in fact there is also another imperative, independent self-determination, an imperative that is distinct from the need for recognition. Siep claims that if the "independence" imperative is not taken into account, Hegel's solution seems to be forced on the individuals against their will. But if both imperatives – the need for independence and the need for recognition – are taken to be equally vital, Hegel's solution no longer seems so arbitrary.

Returning to the original question of the connection between crime/punishment and Hegel's transition from civil society to the state qua concrete embodiment of ethical life, the connection to the discussion of Fichte's view is evident. That which the individual seeks to achieve by her criminal act is the very sort of absolute independence and self-determination that defines the second imperative, whose invocation, Siep claims, resolves Fichte's dilemma. Granted, the individual does not confront another individual as per that dilemma, but rather the social institution of the law – as Siep puts it, the I confronts the "we" – but

in both cases the same self-restriction dynamic is operative. The law, representing the general will, seeks absolute independence and self-determination, and therefore restricts the individual's space to achieve those same goals; the individual responds by asserting himself contrary to that general will. This strife between two absolute wills generates self-limitation, rather than compulsion of the individual. The mutual self-restriction, or in terms of Fichte's dilemma, each side's desisting from annihilating the other, can be viewed from two perspectives: that of the individual and that of the law. From the individual's perspective, punishment represents the shift from demanding total autonomy to recognizing that its achievement requires the individual's annihilation, and hence the demand must be relinquished; from the law's perspective, the self-restriction involves willingness to forgive the criminal deed, and in effect to nullify it. This mutual self-limiting on the part of the individual and the general will creates the shared ethical space that transforms the law's coercive force into an empowering force through which, and only through which, the individual can actualize herself as autonomous and self-determining.

According to Siep, this is the reasoning behind Hegel's dialectical transition to the state, and the justification for his declaration that it is only in the framework of the state, which expresses the general will, that the individual can achieve complete freedom and independence. After several earlier attempts, Hegel succeeded in formulating this argument, Siep claims, only in the second Jena lecture series, delivered in 1805/1806, that is, in SPS. In a nutshell, Siep claims that upon the transition to the framework of the state, the individual "does not lose himself, but rather finds his identity."⁶⁸

But is this explanation satisfactory? Does the idea that the struggle for mutual recognition expands from the realm of intersubjective relations to that of the individual's relationship to the state indeed neutralize the coerciveness of the state's power vis-à-vis the individual? Or does it merely establish that the state framework is flexible, "liberal" enough not to require the individual's total capitulation to its dictates, and to permit a modicum of individuality? I would argue that viewing the state as an expression of the general will, as based on the consensus of individuals who recognize each other, does not offset its coerciveness vis-à-vis the individual.

Siep's explanation, in other words, is flawed. To understand why, recall that the response to the individual's insistence that her individuality be recognized was punishment, which made her aware that she could only achieve self-affirmation within the framework of the law.

But this awareness is not reciprocal: the law manifests no such awareness. Its absoluteness, validity, and universality having been harmed by the individual who sought self-affirmation via crime, it can ignore the individual's quest for independence, and forces itself on it by imposing punishment. As Hegel describes the process, this struggle does not result in the law's being in any way dependent on the individual, but rather, in its primacy over the individual. The law's response is not symmetrical to the individual's, for the law, by virtue of its comprehensiveness, can afford to mete out punishment disinterestedly, in essence "forgiving" or excusing the individual, and thereby providing him with the affirmation requires for his own self-affirmation. Hence the individual's attempt to assert independence vis-à-vis the law is not analogous to the attempt to gain recognition from a peer. The unique mutual dependence of intersubjective interaction created the shared space where law serves as a constraint on individuals confronting Fichte's recognition-annihilation dilemma. But law cannot itself fill the role of the individuals that created it, hence the alleged parallelism in the struggle for recognition (between individual vs. individual and individual vs. the law) is illusory.

On Fichte's account, individuals' mutual self-restriction creates the shared space for law. According to Siep's version of Hegel's account, in the struggle between the individual and the law, a parallel self-restriction creates the shared space of ethical life. Hegel's account itself, however, indicates that the shared space is *not* created by mutual self-restriction, but rather, by the law's "having mercy on" the individual, its tolerating and indulging him. In a long note at the end of "Objective Spirit," Hegel describes the asymmetry between the law and the individual:

It [the law – P.I.] must recognize this evil [referring to a crime – P.I.] as itself, to pardon it – or, as deed, undo it. For even this individual deed is a drop which does not touch the absolute but is [rather] absorbed by it. ... A deathstroke – what does it matter to the whole? And therein, again, it is undone (*Ungeschehenes*).⁶⁹

What, then, impels the movement from the stage where law is coercive and alienating, to that of ethical life, where the individual identifies with the law? According to Hegel, it is not the result of a consensual decision, but is dialectically necessitated by the unsatisfying situation generated by objectification. Siep's alleged struggle for recognition between the I and the "we" offers an elaborate description of that dismal predicament, but does not identify any mechanism in SPS that neutralizes the individual's complete subjection to the general will, the spirit of the

people – in other words, that does not give primacy to the universal over the particular. Ultimately, Siep too admits that there is an asymmetry between the particular and the universal, the individual consciousness and the general will, and thus avoids an apologetic liberal reading of Hegel.⁷⁰ However, he chooses to focus on the question of whether Hegel indeed provides, in “Constitution,” a coherent description of the existence of the free and autonomous individual. This approach is premised on Hegel’s motivation for re-constituting the ancient Greek ethical–political ethos in post-Enlightenment terms, that is, in terms of consciousness theory.

This perspective allows Siep to highlight the relevance of Hegel’s account to contemporary questions in practical philosophy. This emphasis is facilitated by Hegel’s methodology, which offers a hypothetical description of the genesis of social institutions that seeks to ground these institutions in ethical principles. For instance, the struggle for recognition is not only the causal impetus for new institutions (the family, civil society, the state), but also embodies the ethical norm that individuals have a right to autonomy; it can thus be invoked with a view to correcting a basic flaw in contemporary practical philosophy. This flaw is the untenable dichotomy between the theoretical–procedural approach to social institutions, which seeks to formulate principles for their optimal functioning, and the empirical reality that as products of historical processes, these institutions operate on the basis of principles that reflect the values of the societies that gave rise to them. Hegel’s Jena thought, especially the theory of mutual recognition as presented in SPS, offers a model for reconciling this dichotomy. Its twin focuses – description and justification – make it a suitable basis for construction of a “normative theory of social institutions,” precisely the sort of integrative theory that is often lacking in contemporary political philosophy.⁷¹

To summarize, I would argue that in the final analysis Siep implicitly concedes that, as Habermas and Honneth argue, and I have sought to show, Hegel has not justified the transition from civil society to state. Although Hegel is correct in his diagnosis of modernity’s ills, he does not manage to find a remedy, to devise a program that preserves the Aristotelian cooperative ideal within the conceptual framework of modernity. What I described above as the new strategy adopted in SPS, namely, taking modernity as the point of departure, and imparting to it elements of the classical Greek outlook, also fails.⁷²

This is not to say, however, that Hegel’s exposition of the final stages in the unfolding of Spirit is altogether unedifying. But before we assess its positive contribution, let us set aside the question of the transition

from "Objective" to "Absolute" Spirit, and return to examination of the text.

What does Hegel mean by the terms "Constitution" and "Absolute Spirit"? Most of the commentators make do with a critical analysis of Part 3 of SPS ("Constitution"), or give a cursory description, which often simply characterizes Part 3 as a modern envisioning of the Greek polis.⁷³ But a more thorough account, an account that takes seriously Hegel's claim that in this part of SPS he proposes an answer to the central dilemma of modernity, may prove instructive. "Constitution" is divided into three main sections (A. Classes: The Nature of Self-Ordering Spirit; B. Government: The Self-Certain Spirit of Nature; C. Art, Religion, and Science); section A has two sub-sections (i. The Lower Classes and Their Outlooks; ii. The Universal Class). A prefatory section both describes the state as the culmination of Spirit's return to itself, and distinguishes this account of the state from alternative accounts, mainly the social contract account and the account that views the state as tyrannical.⁷⁴ Hegel invokes these accounts so that his own view of the state can avoid their flaws, but it is unclear whether his view contains any positive content of its own.

Hegel opens "Constitution" with the following definition of the state:

The state as [common] wealth is as much the being-negated (*Aufgehobenseyn*) of individualized existence as it is [the negation] of the in-itself in existence and of the pure being-in-itself of the person. In the law alone does the human being have his existence, his being, and thinking. The law knows itself as the absolute force – which is wealth, even as it sacrifices the general wealth; which safeguards right [i.e., principle], as much as reasonableness and adjustment [i.e., utility]; which safeguards life, and punishes with life, as it pardons evil and grants life where it is forfeit.

Thus this Spirit is the absolute power everywhere, which lives in itself and now must give itself this view of itself as such, i.e., to make itself its own end (*Zweck*).⁷⁵

This description of the end result of Spirit's development is fully in harmony with Hobbes's notion of the commonwealth and theological-political theories that identify the sovereign with the deity. The core element is that only through negation of one's individuality is self-actualization possible. In Hobbes's formulation, which Hegel rejects, this idea is expressed differently: self-preservation requires us to surrender the right to self-defense to a third party. The idea that the state is like a

colossal individual is not, of course, unique to Hegel, and is a familiar trope in the Judeo-Christian tradition. What is original about Hegel's stance is the ascription of self-consciousness to that colossal individual, allowing for twin perspectives from which to examine constitution of the state, which, it must be kept in mind, is the process of Spirit's self-constitution. We can view the process from Spirit's perspective, and watch as the state, that "colossal individual" – become aware of itself through the law. On the other hand, we can view it from the perspective of the "real" individual seeking self-actualization. To the extent that this requires self-preservation, the ensuing account is compatible with Hobbes's.

It is the first perspective that differentiates Hegel's account from social contract accounts, and in terms of which he critiques them. For from the perspective of Spirit, whose purpose is achieved in the state, in the primacy of the law, the actualization of the autonomous individual is not forced, and cannot be understood in isolation from Spirit's own self-actualization. Spirit actualizes itself in the general will, embodied in the individual wills it comprises – there is no general will in abstraction from individual wills. This process is mediated by Spirit's self-externalization in societal institutions, and cannot be achieved without it. At the same time, this process of Spirit's self-actualization is the condition for the individual's self-actualization. There is thus reciprocal conditionality here: the individual's quest for actualization is a component of Spirit's self-actualization, which makes individual self-actualization possible. Only with this in mind can we understand Hegel's claim that the constitution of the general will as the result of the one-time act of signing a contract is not a "realistic" description, since it assumes that the general will is created by a one-time act on the part of the individual, without grasping that its creation is a two-way process.⁷⁶

Hegel's alternative to the social contract model identifies Spirit's self-actualization, its return to itself, with the "great man," the charismatic leader, who, though an individual, embodies the general will: "In this way all states were established, through the noble force of great men."⁷⁷ But in virtue of what does such a leader exemplify Spirit's self-actualization? It is not coercion that makes the individual submit to such a leader, for the individual does not consider the leader an alien and external force, but rather, individuals identify with this leader's will, though they feel that it differs from their own.

The great man has something in him by [virtue of] which others may call him their lord. They obey him against their will. Against their

will, his will is their will. Their immediate pure will is his, but their conscious will is different. The great man has the former [i.e., their pure will] on his side, and they must obey, even if they do not want to. This is what is preeminent in the great man – to know the absolute will [and] to express it – so that all flock to his banner [and] he is their god.⁷⁸

This notion of the leader avoids the problem, in social contract theory, of the disparity between the individual will and the general will, but not the asymmetry inherent in the transfer of individual rights to the leader, and the mandatory obedience to the general will. Hegel assumes that only through these measures can the individual will be actualized. Though unappealing to the contemporary mind, this situation entails its own overcoming, à la Wittgenstein's ladder. Experiencing absolute submission to a tyrant to whom one surrenders her will out of identification with that charismatic leader provides "education toward obedience," through which tyranny eventually becomes "superfluous," and is replaced by "the rule of law."

Through tyranny we have the immediate alienation (*Entäusserung*) of the individual's actual will – transcended, immediate – this is education toward obedience. Through this education – rather knowing the universal as the actual wills – tyranny has become superfluous, replaced by the rule of law. The force exercised by the tyrant is the force of law, in itself. Through obedience, the law itself is no longer an alien force, but rather the known universal will.

Tyranny is overthrown by the people because it is abhorrent, vile, etc. – *but in actuality it is overthrown only because it is superfluous.*⁷⁹

This passage is crucial, as it enables us to understand the Absolute as a self-differentiating process that ultimately overcomes what initially appears to be coerciveness. The Absolute's self-differentiation is not a closed, self-contained process, but is dependent on its finite externalizations. The discussion about the leader allows us to understand the reciprocity of the two perspectives just mentioned. Spirit now knows itself as a unity, and has regained its initial integrity; the individual is no longer alienated from the general will. On the social contract model, the individuals unite into a totality, but that totality, never having gone through the educational process of internalizing identification with the law, is alienated. On the Hegelian alternative, the leader represents this mechanism, unifying the citizenry into an organic whole that is the

culmination of Spirit's returning to itself from otherness, estrangement, objectification. The advantage of the alternative account, for Hegel, is that it shows how absolute submission undertaken voluntarily is ultimately self-annihilating. The social contract account cannot show this, since there is no gradual development, no process of awareness, self-consciousness, enlightenment, but only a one-time act.

Hegel's alternative to the social contract account first speaks of the charismatic leader, then of the tyrant, and lastly of the overthrowing of tyranny and its replacement by the rule of law. The formative experience of living under the charismatic leader and the tyrant provides the necessary grounding for constitution of the "rule of law" regime. At least in its initial stage, the rule of law is understood in its democratic, modern sense, viz., as linked to majority rule.⁸⁰ Hegel emphasizes the "majority rule" principle, and the necessity of acceptance of majority decisions by the opposed minority even when these decisions are contrary to their beliefs. This creates a gap between conviction and action, a recalcitrance Hegel criticizes harshly ("this obstinacy of abstract will, of empty right – without regard to the matter at hand") and considers typically German.⁸¹ (Here he is clearly referring to Kant, whose ethical-political doctrine he deems abstract.) This shortcoming of majority rule is familiar, but Hegel points out another as well: the contingency of the individual will. For the individual "must give it up when opposed to the majority." And even as reflecting the general will, "its implementation posits a genuinely will-less obedience, [in which] each surrenders his opinion about the implementation."⁸²

For our purposes, the key aspect of Hegel's critique of democracy is the analysis of the relationship between universal and particular on which it rests.⁸³ Each stage in the emergence of democracy, as Hegel reconstructs it, has obvious deficiencies. These deficiencies involve imbalanced domination relations, even when the imbalance results from what seems to be the individual's willing waiver of her rights. Similarly inadequate is the converse situation, where the general will to which all submit loses its importance as an independent force through which the individual achieves self-actualization. For if the general will is interpreted nominalistically, as merely an aggregate of the individual wills that are subject to it, it does not suffice to enable the individual's self-actualization. Rejecting both these imbalanced situations, Hegel puts forward the idea of ethical life, the totality within which it will be possible to achieve dialectical identity between the general will and the will of the individual, thereby avoiding the said imbalance.⁸⁴ Only within the space of ethical life can the reciprocal claims made by the multitude of concrete

individuals be balanced and harmonized vis-à-vis those made by the “colossal” individual. The balancing requires that individuals not be directly dependent on one another, to avert domination relations and mutual negation. The individuals are, rather, independent, though still connected to one another via the mediating totality, which is itself wholly independent of the state and its citizens.

Hegel asserts this dialectical identity as follows:

The totality, however, is the medium, the free spirit – supporting itself, free of these completely fixed extremities. The totality, however, is independent of the knowledge [on the part of] individuals, just as it is independent of the characters of rulers.... The other individual [i.e., the citizen] counts only as externalized, cultivated, as that which he has made of himself. The totality, the communal entity (*Gemeinwesen*), is as little tied to the one as to the other. It is the self-sustaining, indestructible body. Regardless of the prince's or the citizens' characteristics, the communal entity is self-enclosed and self-sustaining.⁸⁵

Here, in the midst of expounding his theory of actualized Spirit, Hegel invokes the ideal of the polis. He does so not merely to draw an analogy between ethical life and the polis, but to highlight the shift that took place upon modern philosophy's embrace of the principle of the autonomous subject, a shift that makes contemporary realization of the polis ideal impossible unless a corresponding change is introduced. Specifically, ethical life cannot be direct, but must be mediated: it must be understood as arising from Spirit's self-knowledge, achieved through its total externalization. The socio-political ideal of ethical life is conceptually linked to Spirit's self-understanding as self-consciousness. That is, there is no way to “detach” the ideal of ethical life from the process of Spirit's coming to know itself, and without the latter, the entire movement from the preceding stage of human development, viz., civil society, to that of ethical life, a transition we explored at length, has no theoretical basis. If Spirit is viewed as extraneous “metaphysics” that can be ignored, then the critique of Hegel voiced by Habermas, Honneth, Wellmer, and others, is indeed valid.

What is this criticism? The claim is that Hegel has not shown why his critique of the inadequacies ensuing from civil society, which is, after all, not barbaric, but based on law and intersubjective relations, requires a solution as radical as his own, namely, the postulation of Spirit, a “super” entity whose self-unfolding mediates individual self-actualization. Hegel's solution requires that individuals relinquish their claim to

absolute autonomy and internalize the mediation of something greater than themselves in order to create the space that will subsequently enable their self-actualization as autonomous subjects. The critics find this solution excessive, arguing that addressing the deficiencies of civil society does not necessarily mandate the Hegelian state. Wellmer, for instance, contends that Hegel has not demonstrated that the mutual recognition that engenders law cannot anchor a shared space where the foundation for political life is liberal democracy as the term is understood today.⁸⁶ Hegel has not shown that the mode of societal arrangement he deems “ethical life” – unalienated, balanced, and harmonious – is incompatible with democracy. Similarly, Habermas and Honneth contend that the notion of Spirit undermines Hegel’s account, inasmuch as it requires relinquishing the idea of intersubjectivity as sufficient for self-actualization, and with it the possibility of a democratic vision of the state.

Demonstration of the necessity of the Hegelian model must, it follows, be rooted in the state–Spirit nexus. The dilemma is clear: according to Hegel, existence that is harmonious and free of alienation requires the metaphysical edifice of absolute Spirit, but to accept absolute Spirit is to accept that something “beyond” individuals and the societies they are part of determines individual self-actualization. From the contemporary perspective, however, the latter thesis has no philosophical justification. To pinpoint the problem more precisely, it seems to lie in the *absolute* nature of Spirit, as manifested at the stage of ethical life. At the earlier stages of Spirit’s self-unfolding, Spirit came across as a philosophically innocuous metaphor or unique mode of presenting Hegel’s argument. It is only at the stage of ethical life, when Spirit seeks self-determination as absolute truth, that the commentators deem it objectionable. At this point, I will not attempt to resolve the dilemma, just as earlier, I did not attempt to come up with an answer to the problem of the transition from civil society to the state. Only after we have set out the full picture of Spirit’s culminating stages will I assess whether it succeeds in achieving the goals that motivated Hegel.

Let us now move beyond our discussion of the introduction to “Constitution,” which presents the optimal ordering of the organic totality that enables individual self-actualization, to the substantive sections.⁸⁷ The first two, “Classes” and “Government,” seek to provide a detailed objective – in the Hegelian sense of “externalized” – description of Spirit, which has now returned to itself and knows itself as a totality. Hegel stresses that this description is a description of a consciousness, not that of the concrete individual on her own but rather, that of the “absolute individuality of a people.”⁸⁸ The objective aspect of

this “absolute individuality” is manifested in the social structure of classes, by means of which this consciousness grows stronger, until the process culminates in “self-certain” Spirit, which is revealed to be the self-consciousness personified by government officials, and indeed by the government itself. This self-consciousness is the pinnacle of Spirit’s self-objectification: Spirit is completely self-determined, absolute, and free. No longer is there a gap between contingency (i.e., engagement in relationships with others) and freedom.

What it means for Spirit to be absolutely free, Hegel tells us, is that at the final stage of its self-return, Spirit creates “another world” that takes the form of Spirit itself, as Spirit no longer requires objectified external expressions of itself in order to know itself (though these external expressions were necessary for Spirit to reach this stage), but rather knows itself as absolute and unconditional self-knowledge.⁸⁹ We will not focus on the status and ontological import of this description of Spirit’s pure self-relation, but rather on the concrete content Hegel imparts to the objectified totality that is the “absolute individuality of the people.”

In “A. Classes: The Nature of Self-Ordering Spirit,” Hegel describes a social system that is divided into lower and upper classes. The former are peasants/farmers (*bauerin*), townspeople (burghers), merchants; the latter, which he calls the “universal class,” are those involved in public governance: the administrative and military classes. He begins by describing the peasantry, which is characterized by the unmediated trust it places in government. This trust reflects the fact that those who work the land, being directly, and entirely, dependent on nature, do not grasp themselves as distinct from nature – a feeling that is reinforced anew each time they work the soil – and hence lack conscious individuality.

Thus the peasant class is this unindividualized trust, having its individuality in... the earth. Just as, in his mode of work, the peasant is not the laborer of the abstract [i.e., industrial] form, but rather provides approximately for most or all of his needs, so only in his inner life is his work connected to his activity. The connection between his end and its actualization is the unconscious aspect: nature, the seasons, and the trust that what he has put into the ground will come up of itself.⁹⁰

Hegel describes the farmer as paying his taxes and fulfilling obligations “because that is how things are,” without really understanding why this is necessary. When new taxes are imposed, he sees this as reflecting his master’s, or the aristocracy’s, many needs. In describing the farmer,

Hegel endeavors, as always, to find a point that will impel movement to the next phase of Spirit's development, finding it in the farmer's cognitive relation to the world: he wants to be informed of duties imposed on him, and to be given a reason for their imposition, so that he can assent. He can obey trustingly only if he can understand what is being asked of him, but does not engage in deliberation or analysis, exercise discretion or choice. He has understanding and will only to the extent that they enable him to obey his master. Inasmuch as he receives and must assent to instructions from the lord, the farmer thus has a modicum of abstract understanding. This is the seed of the cognitional abilities of the next class, the burghers, in whom the abstract aspect of consciousness is more pronounced.⁹¹ The burgher's knowledge is abstract knowledge of the law, and even his labor is "the abstract labor of individual handicrafts." Whereas the farmer's labor involves direct physical engagement with the natural ground, the burgher's, which presupposes a division of labor, does not.

The labor of the *Bürger* class is the abstract labor of individual handicrafts. Its outlook is that of uprightness (*Rechtschaffenheit*). It has taken labor out of nature's hands and has elevated the process of giving shape (*das Formiren*) above the unconscious level.⁹²

The import of this process of increasing abstractness is that the basis for the individual's self-affirmation, for recognition of her individuality, her "worth and uprightness," now resides in the individual herself, and the products of her labor, i.e., property. As in earlier stages of Spirit's development, this process of increasing abstractness is one of distancing, of the individual's carving out space, separateness, an identity. She knows herself as someone recognized by others as a distinct individual, this recognition being based on external expressions of that individuality, namely, property. Hegel captures the difference between the burgher and the farmer with a striking vignette describing the disparate pleasures they get from downing a glass of beer or wine at the local pub:

Unlike the crude peasant, [the burgher] does not enjoy his glass of beer or wine in order to rise above his usual numbness, partly to enliven his prattling gossip and wit – but rather to prove to himself, in his fine coat and in the grooming of his wife and children, that he is as good as another and that he has achieved all this. What he enjoys thereby is himself, his worth and uprightness; this he has earned through his work, and it stands to his credit. It is not the

pleasure itself he enjoys, as much as the fact that he enjoys it, his self-image.⁹³

The burgher takes pleasure in the affirmation of his separateness, his individuality, his material "substance." But again, the dialectical process finds a leverage point from which to propel Spirit to the next class, that of the merchants: the burgher's pleasure in his self-image reflects utter disconnection from any concrete object, and completely shaped by his view of others' perception of him. This severance from direct physical engagement with nature ("the Self has gained independence from the earth") becomes the defining feature of the merchants, the last of the lower classes.

Detachment from unmediated engagement with nature is tantamount to creation of a self-confident individuality. It requires liberation from absolute obedience and total trust, and their replacement by partial obedience, partial trust. Self-trust, confidence in oneself, becomes the basis for trust, not only in other subjects with whom one engages in intersubjective relations, but also in the generic "other" that is embodied in social institutions, and represented by the law. Hegel describes the process as one of increasing abstraction: the individual relinquishes the external objects that mediated her comportment in the world. Abstraction reaches its zenith in exchange, where the transactions are monetary, and the merchant does not create, or even design, the products being traded. Here the mediating factor, money, is altogether abstract.

The mercantile class: the merchant's work is pure exchange, neither the natural nor the artificial production and forming [of goods]. Exchange is movement, spiritual, the medium that is freed of uses and needs, as it is freed of work and immediacy [e.g., the stock exchange].⁹⁴

From the perspective of the individual, the objective anchor that had bound the farmer so tightly to nature, and was weakened somewhat upon the transition to the class of burghers, has now been cut altogether. The physical aspects of things are of no consequence, and what counts now is the essence of things as represented by their cash value. This is true of individuals as well: "a person is as real as the money he has," as Hegel puts it. Given that the only gauge of existence is an essence that is independent of any objective element, an "abstraction from all individuality, character, skills of the individual," alienation ensues. Indeed, the very concept of the individual has become vacuous:

The essence of the thing is the thing itself. Value is hard cash [*klingende Muntze*: literally, “ringing coin”]. ... This outlook is that harshness of spirit, wherein the individual, altogether alienated, no longer counts. It is strict [adherence to] law: the deal must be honored, no matter what suffers for it – family one’s welfare, life, etc. Complete mercilessness.⁹⁵

The ongoing distancing from the farmer’s intimate connection with the soil, nature, the immediate environment, to the merchant’s state of vacuous, alienated abstractness calls to mind the process described in part 1, whereby cognition, as a process of the I’s grasping its separateness, developed through externalization, objectification, and negation. But despite the similarity, we must keep in mind that in part 3, we are discussing the stage *after* objective Spirit has returned to itself, and is expressed in the state and its constitution. In discussing the social classes, Hegel is not speaking of the sublation of the earlier stages, but of a type of differentiation that features in Spirit’s self-description after it has actualized itself as absolute Spirit. This differentiation sets out several alternative relationships between the individual and the state, or more accurately, the Absolute as manifested in the social institution of the state. These three modes of relating – as farmer, artisan (“burgher”), merchant – are real options available to the individual. Each has its drawbacks, its inadequacies. All fall short of the ideal of identity between universal and particular, but the options remain open. Indeed, what necessitates the division into classes in the first place is the need for diverse modes of integrating into the social totality of the state, since satisfaction of society’s needs requires that individuals fulfill different functions, and these disparate roles may give rise to dissimilar modes of social belonging.⁹⁶

The uniqueness of Hegel’s account of the classes as a mode of differentiating what would seem to be an absolute totality into which everything is assimilated becomes even clearer when we look at his account of the upper classes, which he calls “the universal class.”⁹⁷ By using its sovereign power, the universal class is able to preserve the people’s differentiation into different social classes. Whereas the discussion of the lower classes revolved around the individual’s connection to objects, via work – producing, designing, or trading them – the discussion of the universal class revolves around the social order, that is, the ordering and management of relations within and between the classes. The universal class encompasses the government and the military. It is the class within which the radical self-interestedness characteristic of the merchant class

is "restrained" by engagement in a public role that goes beyond satisfaction of personal desires and has universal significance. In working for the common good, members of this class express their individuality without seeking to particularize their engagement with the universal – with public administration – to gratify narrow self-interests, and therefore succeed in achieving the ideal of universal-particular identity. Hegel describes this identity in the opening sentence of his account of the universal class: "The public class is immediately this involvement of the universal element in everything individual... giving it life and sustenance, and bringing it back into the universal."⁹⁸

Revisiting, for a moment, the question of the transition from law-based civil society to the state as an ethical totality within which the individual is harmoniously integrated, it would seem that differentiation into classes compromises the latter. For with regard to the lower classes, it appears to undermine the ideal of integration that preserves individuality. If individuals can achieve full self-actualization only via the sort of absorption into society that is characteristic of the "public" or "universal" class, that ideal cannot be realized by members of the lower classes on their own, but only through the mediation of the public classes. Taylor points out this contradiction, adducing it to argue that Hegel rejects the goal of full, direct, equal, and universal participation of all individuals in the general will, that is, in the state.⁹⁹ It follows, he contends, that Hegel rejects the notion of absolute freedom that many Hegel scholars take to ensue from such universal participation in the state. Taylor claims that according to Hegel, the notion of absolute freedom entails absolute homogeneity, viz., the absence of any division into social classes. The fact that Hegel emphasizes the necessity of such a division, Taylor argues, indicates that he rejects the idea of absolute freedom, and similarly rejects the claim that all individuals must be fully assimilated into the state qua ethical society.

I concur with Taylor that, given Hegel's views on social differentiation, he indeed rejects the idealized notion of absolute freedom for all. But it does not follow that Hegel denies that every individual can be fully integrated into the life of the state. Indeed, not only it is false that differentiation within the social totality undermines the possibility of full self-actualization of individuals from the lower classes, but this differentiation constitutes the sole means by which they can achieve it. According to Hegel, the only means of assimilating into the totality is via a reference group. The conception of "equal" absorption into the Absolute – of a single universal mode of participation in the general will – so often ascribed to Hegel by his critics, is too extreme. There is

universal participation, but individuals have disparate modes of participation, reflected in the classes.

Having set out the various classes, and thereby also described Spirit's actualized expression from the perspective of the individuals who make up those classes, Hegel goes back to describing it from Spirit's own perspective. He gathers all the differentiations back into the absolute, or Spirit, as objectively personified by government, in the section entitled "B. Government: The Self-Certain Spirit of Nature," which is just one brief page.¹⁰⁰ Hegel describes the outcome of this self-return as the restoration of a self-confident Spirit, Spirit that has attained "self-certainty" through embodiment in a system that organizes the communal life of individuals – government. It is tempting to forgo this section, which appears to merely repeat the description of the totality from the perspective of Spirit, and focus on Hegel's account of Spirit's concrete expressions in the various social institutions discussed above. But to do so would undermine the theoretical justification for the entire process of Spirit's unfolding that led up to those institutions. For viewing the outcome of the process from Spirit's perspective provides the context that renders the various modes of integration into the state meaningful. It accounts for the fulfillment experienced by the individual who is actualized by being absorbed, via a social class, into the universal, thereby gaining freedom and autonomy. This actualization has taken place within the objective framework through which Spirit attains full self-knowledge, and we must always remember that on Hegel's view, there is reciprocity between the individual consciousness and Spirit.

The fact that Spirit's self-knowledge is mediated by self-externalization – in the present stage, externalization as government – is epistemically significant, for Spirit's self-certainty and knowledge is imparted to these externalizations, which thus embody Spirit's rationality and certainty. The account of the state from the perspective of the individual, viz., as differentiated into specific classes and institutions, lacks any rational necessity, and is merely contingent. Viewing it from the perspective of Spirit endows it with a rational justification: the differentiated state fulfills the criterion for Spirit's self-restoration, namely, it allows for Spirit's complete self-knowledge in all its otherness, not out of alienation from this otherness, but by identifying with, by appropriating this self-otherness. This cognizant identification with its self-otherness expresses not only Spirit's self-knowledge and certainty, but also its freedom, allowing it to overcome its dependence on this otherness.

Hegel summarizes this crucial move, which is the justification for all of "Constitution," in the opening paragraph of the section that follows

"Government," namely, "C. Art, Religion, and Science."¹⁰¹ Spirit's self-return expresses itself in art, religion, and philosophy, which are its "content," as Hegel puts it, its concrete expressions.

The absolutely free spirit, having taken its determinations back into itself, now generates another world. It is a world which has the form of spirit itself, where spirit's work is completed in itself and the spirit attains a view (*Anschauung*) of what is spirit itself, as itself.¹⁰²

In describing absolutely free Spirit, Hegel returns to art, the vehicle invoked by Hölderlin and the Romantics as the means of surmounting alienation, to religion, the direction he tried in the theological writings and the "Fragment of a System," and to philosophy, the option he ultimately settles on. This confluence highlights the profound conceptual connection between the notion of the Absolute and the cultural-philosophical project of overcoming alienation. The long process we have tracked as it developed in the Jena period has borne fruit: the Absolute, the possibility of identity between the same and the different, and ethical life as the objectification of this identity and hence the means of bridging the divide between the individual and the collective. Alienation, we must recall, ensued from Kantian dualism, which – in line with the reflective philosophy of subjectivity – relinquished the Absolute and in effect absolutized the subject. Returning to the very same Absolute that was dismissed as unattainable and illusory, Hegel has discovered, is the key to resolving the problem of alienation.

6 Concluding remarks

But what is the Absolute? In discussing Spirit's self-restoration as the Absolute, the Jena writings have provided important insights about human existence, the constitution and legitimacy of social institutions, and so on. All these insights are premised on constitution of the Absolute, the entity that enables the individual to actualize freedom, in the positive sense of autonomy, not the vacuous sense of solipsistic independence, via the individual's absorption into an otherness which preserves uniqueness. In the same way, Spirit achieves absolute freedom by "returning" from its externalizations, not by wholly negating them, but by sublating them, by assimilating them into itself as its content. The processes of constitution of the Absolute, on the one hand, and the actualization of autonomy, on the other, are not independent, but reciprocal. With this insight, Hegel has arrived at the consummate formulation of his solution to the problem of alienation.

This being so, it is impossible to ignore Hegel's leap from objective to absolute Spirit, a transition that, I argued earlier, Hegel was unable to justify philosophically. If, as I have just claimed, the actualization of individual autonomy and the constitution of the Absolute are one and the same, does this not mean that in accepting Hegel's views as to the former, especially the idea of mutual recognition, yet completely ignoring those regarding the latter, critics of Hegel's "metaphysical" doctrines are missing out on a profoundly meaningful insight? I am speaking of Hegel's insight as to the possibility of achieving individual autonomy in concrete social frameworks, and providing rational, comprehensible justifications for those frameworks.

To put it differently, Hegel has, I submit, indeed succeeded in sketching the mechanism by which the free, autonomous individual of modernity, nurtured on Enlightenment values, can be integrated into a concrete political context committed to the ancient Greek ethos of harmonious, unalienated existence within a society that provides a sense of belonging akin to that one feels when at home, in the bosom of one's family. That mechanism is the Absolute, by means of which these two pictures can be seen, not as incompatible alternatives, but as complementary descriptions of one and the same thing. The possibility of reflecting on the Absolute is the possibility of conceiving harmonious, unalienated existence. If there is no philosophical justification for the Absolute, the plausibility of unalienated existence is equally indefensible. In short, a modern reinvention of the polis is feasible only if the Absolute is knowable.

Where does this leave those who deem Hegel's leap from objective to absolute Spirit untenable, and thus reject any talk of the Absolute? It is important to distinguish between the project of assessing the feasibility of implementing Hegelian insights, of making Hegel relevant to our own lives today, and that of understanding his theory.

There seems to be broad agreement among those interested in the former project that it is imperative to eschew invocation of the Absolute. Taylor, to whom revitalization of the Hegelian model is appealing, takes this position:

The thinking agent is already deeply involved in the world as an acting body...and thinks only through the forms (languages, social practices, etc.) which he/she shares with others. Mind is always in the world, and social. All this Hegel brilliantly pioneered.¹⁰³

These commentators take Hegel's primary insight to be his theory of objective Spirit.¹⁰⁴

Yet this stance raises the problem of justification. How do we know that the said social practices are justifiable – perhaps they are merely the customary local ways of doing things? As members of a given culture, we are unable to think about our practices within that culture as no more justified than the practices of any other culture, or any other practices we might conceive of. It is difficult for us to be completely unbiased about our own mode of social organization, and assess it as if it is just one of many possible such modes. To dismiss absolute Spirit, and content ourselves with objective Spirit, raises the specter of this complacency: “There is a threat of mere historicism, relativism, non-cognitivism, which post-modern philosophers might advise us to relax and enjoy, but which certainly didn’t satisfy Hegel, and perhaps shouldn’t satisfy us.”¹⁰⁵

Taylor, and any philosopher who upholds Enlightenment values, seeks to avert this threat, a goal that can be achieved by adducing the Absolute, as Spirit’s unfolding is not contingent. But we cannot avail ourselves of this solution, this way of closing the gap between the fact that our lives are situated within a specific historical era, and our desire for a way of life that is autonomous, just, and authentic, because we do not believe that there is a way we can grasp the putative solution – the Absolute. Hence we must seek another kind of justification, one that is not abstract and does not sever us from the specific context of our own lives, i.e., a justification that it falls under the “objective Spirit” rubric.

But how do we get from ‘objective spirit’ to something absolute? Hegel’s way (to use my jargon) was to recapture the upshot of his hermeneutical dialectics, tracing our development in history, by what claimed to be an ontic dialectic, unfolding the necessary connections in being.... If the development of Reason in history turns out not to be just the way things happened to fall out, but is in fact the necessary unfolding of the stages of Geist and Reason itself, then we have an unchallengeable grounding in reality and truth itself. *But I don’t suppose anyone can accept this today. If not, what can take its place in the way of a more secure grounding for our standards?*¹⁰⁶

It is hard to find fault with this argument, since it indeed seems to be sympathetic to Hegel’s project, but on closer scrutiny it can be seen to diverge from Hegel’s exposition at precisely the point where it anchors the ultimate justification for the normative system that guides our conduct. This divergence does not arise because no justification is needed or possible, but because Hegel’s views seem inimical to the contemporary

“post-metaphysical” zeitgeist. Argumentation framed in terms of absolutes, invoking notions such as “infinite reason,” is so foreign to us that it cannot play its intended role of persuading us of the validity of the social norms we live by. We must thus seek models of justification that are less absolute than Hegel’s, which can provide rationales, but do not purport to be necessary and universal.¹⁰⁷ In speaking of the type of justification that is available to us at the present historical juncture, those who aspire to find contemporary relevance in Hegel’s model can adduce one of his own oft-cited dicta against his invocation of the Absolute: “philosophy too is its time apprehended in thoughts.” The impossibility of justifying our contemporary norms in terms of the Absolute, they can claim, is not a logical or epistemic failing, but reflects dissonance with the way we think about ourselves today. These commentators reject the Absolute, but accept Hegel’s critique of the subjectivist approach.

This partial acceptance of Hegel’s approach is convincing only if we assume that the only role of the Absolute is to justify our norms and social practices. But Spirit also has another role: to offer guidelines for alienation-free existence, for what Hegel calls “ethical life.” Even if we can justify social norms in terms of a conceptual system that is congenial to the contemporary mind, and makes no metaphysical assumptions, viz., in an epistemically acceptable manner, the justification must still pass a normative filter: it must be based on the ideal of eliminating alienation. Hegel’s Absolute purports not only to provide an account of concrete social and political institutions that demonstrates their rationality and repels the threat of relativism, but also a practical model of the ideal of unalienated existence. For the core role of Spirit is to model self-estrangement and self-return. Spirit is Hegel’s answer to the alienation induced by the Kantian, reflection-based account of individual freedom and autonomy. Given that this sort of reasoning created the problem of alienation to begin with, recourse to it as a means of circumventing the Absolute is, obviously, out of the question.

The second path open to those who reject Hegel’s leap from objective to absolute Spirit focuses, not on the possibility of revitalizing Hegel’s model, but on its exposition. Those who take this approach seek to reduce the apparent gap between objective and absolute Spirit, to argue that is less significant than Hegel’s critics claim, that it does not involve objectionable ontological or epistemic commitments. They argue that absolute Spirit can be analyzed in terms of objective Spirit. Hegel does not make a sharp distinction, they claim, between the realm of finite reason – objective Spirit – and the realm alleged to call for infinite reason – absolute Spirit. If the Absolute can be described in terms of

objective Spirit, we can avoid that which Kantian epistemology deems indefensible.¹⁰⁸ In describing the Absolute, this reading will emphasize intersubjective relations. Yet assuming the aptness of the same concepts for both stages of Spirit raises the problem of why the second stage is needed at all. The fact that proponents of this approach find it necessary to offer a reframed account of the Absolute indicates that the account of objective Spirit does not suffice, in itself, to adequately explain alienation-free existence, but the “added value” of the account of absolute Spirit remains to be identified.

Pinkard’s account of the “totality,” the Absolute, offers a good example of the “gap-closing” strategy that nonetheless seeks to retain the distinction between the two stages of Spirit. He describes the “awareness of spirit as spirit” as “the human community’s recognition that it is only the community’s linguistic and cultural practices and the socially instituted structures of mutual recognition that provide the grounds for determining who one is.”¹⁰⁹

Although this characterization does not go beyond objective spirit, Pinkard also sees it as applying to the Absolute, which differs from objective Spirit in only one respect: its comprehensiveness. The difference between the two stages of Spirit manifests itself in the specificity of the social discourse in question. Discourse about objective Spirit is highly concrete, tackling pragmatic issues arising from intersubjective relations, whereas discourse about the Absolute is contemplative. It is religious or philosophical discourse about the core premises of human belief and action.¹¹⁰ This conception of the Absolute does not impose on the community engaged in the said discourse any ontic, epistemic, or ethical commitments beyond those arising from intersubjective interaction. This solution not only identifies a distinction between the two stages of Spirit, it also captures the epistemic dimension of Hegel’s account. Hegel sees the necessity of going beyond intersubjective relations by positing the Absolute, as the price to be paid if ethical norms are to be universally valid. Wishing to retain this universal validity, without paying that exorbitant price, Pinkard construes validity as issuing from consent and “bottom-up” social discourse.

Pinkard describes the totality that ensues from contemplative discourse as follows:

The whole within which we deliberate is not something given at the outset, but is something to be achieved and sustained. As constituted by the patterns of mutual recognition, it rests on the kind of highly mediated interaction we have with each other. *The idea of the whole,*

without which moral reasoning could not be successfully carried out, is not something we bring in immediately from the outside to our moral reasoning, but something we build up within our moral reasoning, presupposing it all the while we are building it up.¹¹¹

Although it seems that, in seeking to preserve rather than dismiss the notion of the Absolute, this approach is faithful to Hegel, it is ultimately no more successful than the attempt to find contemporary relevance in the Hegelian vision without invoking the Absolute. Hegel maintains that subjective reflection, being devoid of any concrete socio-political context, cannot serve to justify ethical norms; as a corrective, he introduces intersubjectivity. But this revision of Kantian reflective subjectivity also has another goal. Subjective accounts sever the individual from the intersubjective context that renders her existence meaningful. Adducing the individual apart from that context not only thwarts justification of moral norms, but also thwarts the possibility of envisioning the good life, one central feature of which is the individual's capacity to overcome alienation and forge a sense of connectedness to the environment that imparts meaning to her life. Focusing on the narrow epistemic context of justifying moral norms, as Pinkard and Taylor do, without ascribing due importance to the Absolute's role in creating the unalienated individual, obscures Hegel's motivation for the enterprise of validating norms in the first place. Hegel seeks to connect modes of justification and action to actualization of the ideal of ethical life, viz., existence wherein the particular and the universal are united.

Intersubjective readings of the Absolute ignore the unmistakable textual evidence that Hegel rejects the intersubjective model precisely because it cannot provide an objective existential "anchor" that enables the individual to fully identify with the surrounding culture, enabling satisfaction of the "harmonious integration" criterion, without losing her distinctness. The question is not whether, from an epistemic (ethical, aesthetic, religious, etc.) perspective, Hegel's intersubjective account provides a better justification for our ethical norms than Kant's account, which rests on the individual's self-relation. Rather, it is the following: can the broadest, most reflective intersubjective discourse point us toward actualization of ethical life free of alienation?

Any contemporary reading of the Absolute will seek to recast it in intersubjective terms, if not circumvent it altogether. To be faithful to Hegel, it must pass two tests: it must preserve rationality, that is, it must be fully within the realm of human reason, and it must allow us to envision ethical life. In *The Science of Logic*, written several years after

SPS, Hegel defines the concept of the "absolute idea" similarly, as "the identity of the theoretical and the practical idea." SPS expresses Hegel's first comprehensive formulation of these desiderata.

To underscore my contention that the primary role of the Absolute is not to provide rational justifications for social norms, but to express our longing for harmonious life, let us end this encounter with Hegel's Jena philosophy by returning to the themes from which we set out. Hegel's search for the Absolute was originally impelled by his diagnosis of the malaise of his day: fragmentation, dissonance, alienation, rupture. The Absolute represented the possibility of treating these pathologies: the originary root (*Ursprung*) of being, which had become divided by a proliferation of oppositions, could be re-constituted by knowledge of that being, which would put an end to the fragmentation and restore its integrity. We have no actual knowledge of that root itself, but we assume that the fact of fragmentation, manifested, e.g., in specific historical contexts, presupposes the possibility of the Absolute's reunification. Not only need there be no identity between the Absolute as the originary state, and the reunified Absolute that has re-integrated the oppositions, but the latter can be expected to be very different from the former, since in the course of re-integration, the Absolute evolves and comes to know itself. The Absolute's duality as both origin and outcome connects the traditional philosophical search for knowledge of foundational principles with the practical project of overcoming malaise, inadequacy, and the sense that something precious has been lost and must be restored. Instead of searching for the lost unity, we rebuild it through our activity in the world, activity that is guided by Spirit's recollection of the root, and belief that it can be restored.

Hegel draws this important connection between knowing the Absolute and aspiring to harmonious existence as early as the "Oldest System-Program for German Idealism," from 1797 (another version of which is the 1800 "Fragment of a System"); its clearest exposition is in the Preface and at the end of DFS. These early writings shed light on shifts in Hegel's thinking about the questions raised by Kant's subjectivist philosophy, but also on the role played by the Absolute in bridging the gap between the theoretical and practical.

In these works, in addition to identifying the need for a philosophical solution to the problem of socio-cultural fragmentation (the "practical" side of Hegel's program), Hegel formulates the important distinction between totality as a mere image, an illusion, and totality as absolute, as truth. The former can be arrived at by understanding, the latter requires

reason. This distinction plays a major role in the transition from civil society to ethical life, for the same reason Hegel takes totality as mere image to be a necessary condition for the emergence of true totality. He presents the transition from totality as mere image to totality as truth, not as a break, but as a process by means of which the illusory nature of the first conception of totality is disclosed, just as exposure of the inadequacies of civil society is a process that makes possible the transition to truly ethical life.

Hegel describes the totality grasped by understanding as a collection of entities that limit each other through a complicated web of mutual dependence. Each entity has its own place as well as a place relative to the other things, but the web itself is not a cohesive whole, not a whole that exists beyond its parts. Each entity is defined by the act of negating its not being another entity. The totality of entities expands from within: we can always give a more comprehensive description of the collection of entities by augmenting the description of the mutual relationships between them. But however accurate it is, the description can never be more than a description of the totality as a system of mutual self-limitations. Understanding can endlessly elaborate the description of the totality, but will never be able to describe it as a true totality, as an absolute totality.

True totality can be grasped, Hegel argues, only by “stepping out of” the manifold of these interrelations and offering an entirely different kind of description. This new description depicts the totality, not as a system of limitations, but as their absolute negation. This is the import of the transition from freedom as the mutual limitations that constitute civil society, to the positive freedom of integration into a harmonious society. Totality as absolute is not simply the negation of totality as mere image. Rather, it is an affirmative negation that renders the absolute totality non-self-limiting and independent. It is not a collection, however detailed and comprehensive, of mutual limitations, but a totality that is independent of limitations.

The connection between totality as image and totality as absolute, then, can be seen to parallel the connection between civil society and ethical life. The transition from understanding to reason, from one form of thinking to another, discloses the image-like nature of totality as a collection of interactions that preserves opposition, and enables its supersession by totality that preserves *difference without opposition*, i.e., without negation that generates fragmentation. Hegel describes this speculative move in the section of DFS entitled “The Need of Philosophy.” He begins by linking the malaise of his day with the need

for philosophy: the mode of grasping the Absolute is conceptually linked to both these phenomena.

If we look more closely at the particular form worn by a philosophy we see that it arises, on the one hand, from the living originality of the spirit whose work and spontaneity have reestablished and shaped the harmony that has been rent; and on the other hand, from the particular form of the dichotomy from which the system emerges.¹¹²

Hegel focuses on philosophy as shaped by dichotomy, and links it to the epistemic status of the Absolute, leading him to the following declaration of principle:

Dichotomy is the source of *the need of philosophy*; and as the culture of the era, it is the unfree and given aspect of the whole configuration [of the era – P.I.]. In [any] culture, the appearance of the Absolute has become isolated from the Absolute and fixated into independence.¹¹³

Dichotomy takes the form of totality as mere “appearance,” as manifold entities that limit each other.

The entire totality of limitations is to be found in it, but not the Absolute itself. [The Absolute is] lost in the parts, where it drives the intellect in the ceaseless development of manifoldness.¹¹⁴

By revealing the mere image, the mere appearance of the Absolute, to be the product of understanding, not reason, we – Spirit – can move beyond this manifold, and begin to reconstruct the original totality, and ultimately, re-constituting the Absolute.

This process of constructing the Absolute out of the manifold generated by Spirit's recollection of the unified originary root is philosophy's only mission. In both versions of the “Philosophy of Spirit,” and indeed, in Hegel's Jena philosophy as a whole, the process is recounted not solely in theoretical terms, but in ethical–political terms as well. It is the latter exposition, I have sought to show, that speaks to Hegel's fundamental motivation.

Notes

Introduction

1. PH 472.

1 What Motivated Hegel's Philosophical Project?

1. In recent decades, several important attempts have been made to fill this lacuna – the absence of a post-Kantian schema – the most salient of which has been that of Henrich (1982, 1991, 2003), who revisits the story of the genesis of German Idealism. See too Horstmann (1991).
2. The English-speaking world has of late experienced a resurgence of interest in German Idealism, especially Hegel, attested to by the numerous books and articles on the subject published over the past decade. Although these studies are far from monolithic, we can safely say, without fear of over-simplification, that the interpretations offered tend to see Hegel's philosophy as the culmination of Kant's epistemological project. See Pippin (1997, 6); Pinkard (1994, 230).
3. Let me pre-empt a possible misunderstanding. The rupture thesis does not, of course, seek to claim that German Idealism is altogether free of Kantian influence, which would be absurd. The rupture thesis can also be formulated as follows: Kant is the source of the problem of Kantian dualism, and its solution requires total rejection of his philosophy, which must be supplanted by a new philosophical program.
4. For a thorough defense of the philosophical importance of this question, see Düsing (1983); Pippin (1989); Henrich (1991); Horstmann (1991).
5. This route is also chosen both by those who seek to show that German Idealism provides insight only into highly speculative epistemological or ontological questions, a claim that is patently indefensible, and by those who seek to show how Idealism sheds profound light on the flaws of the philosophy of subjectivity, and on how accepting the suggested remedy will render the theoretical position espoused by German Idealism less vulnerable to critique.
6. For the time being, I will accept the premise that the transition from Kant to Hegel was accompanied by a substantive change in the philosophic enterprise. This claim will be argued for below, when I describe the genesis of Hegel's philosophy and the main problems it addresses.
7. Although "German Idealism" is sometimes used very broadly as referring to post-Kantian philosophy in general, I use it here as shorthand for the philosophical activity of Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel.
8. It is impossible to discuss German Idealism without using what is now considered to be sexist language, as the pertinent texts are replete with gendered concepts, which were taken for granted in the language of the era. Readers must keep in mind, however, that despite the sexist language of the day, the

authors in question did not take notions such as *Menschheit* to apply to males alone, but rather intended them to refer to all human beings.

9. Taylor provides the best description of the genesis of this movement as part of the story of the emergence of Hegel's philosophy; see Taylor (1975, 1979). Taylor suggests that Hegel's thought should be seen as an attempt to systematically confront the foundational principles of the Enlightenment, on the one hand, and Romanticism, on the other, movements that espoused competing views of man. The Romantic principle of "expressivism" saw man as embedded in an organic natural and cultural context, within which he expresses his goals and desires. By contrast, the Enlightenment view of man, especially as formulated by Kant, sought to liberate man from this dual context of nature and culture, and see him as a rational individual. On this picture of man, the rational individual manifests radical self-determination that demands freedom from any external restrictions on him or his reason. Taylor understands Hegel as seeking to reconcile, as it were, these two incompatible guiding principles, to connect the idea of man as embedded in a specific natural and cultural context with that of the individual demanding freedom. According to Taylor, Hegel saw no need to completely relinquish either of these pictures.
10. See Berlin (1990, 1999). Berlin's description of the origins of Hegelianism is the classic example of such a primarily historical and ideological reading.
11. As noted, the number of studies that explore the systematic development of Hegel's thought is prodigious. Even without surveying all of them, it is obvious that no one today disputes the claim that Hölderlin's contribution was decisive. For a clear exposition of this thesis, see Jamme (1984, 15).
12. For detailed discussion, see Henrich (1971, 1992); Harris (1983); Jamme and Schneider (1990).
13. Schiller expounds this critique in three of his key works on aesthetics and ethics: "On Grace and Dignity" (1793); "On the Aesthetic Education of Man in a Series of Letters" (1795); and "On Naïve and Sentimental Poetry" (1795/96). To rectify the flaws in the Kantian approach to ethics, he invokes the aesthetic perspective, which, he contends, is a more appropriate framework for ethics, as it is applicable not only to man qua thinking being, but also qua agent and sentient being.
14. See ELT 137.
15. StA 6.1, p. 119.
16. ELT 137.
17. On the two works' enormous influence on Hegel and Hölderlin, see Harris (1972, 109–111); Jamme (1983).
18. AE, letter 27.
19. Schiller states: "Closer attention to the character of our age will, however, reveal an astonishing contrast between the contemporary form of humanity and earlier ones, especially that of Greece. The reputation for culture and refinement on which we otherwise rightly pride ourselves vis-à-vis humanity in its *merely* natural state, can avail us nothing against the natural humanity of the Greeks. For they were wedded to all the delights of art and the dignity of wisdom, without however, like us, falling a prey to their seduction.... This disorganization, which was first started within man by civilization and learning, was made complete and universal by the new spirit of government.

It was scarcely to be expected that the simple organization of the early republics should have survived the simplicity of early manners and conditions; but instead of rising to a higher form of organic existence it degenerated into a crude and clumsy mechanism. The polypoid character of the Greek States, in which every individual enjoyed an independent existence but could, when need arose, grow into the whole organism, now made way for an ingenious clock-work, in which, out of the piecing together of innumerable but lifeless parts, a mechanical kind of collective life ensued. State and the Church, laws and customs, were now torn asunder; enjoyment was divorced from labour, the means from the end, the effort from the reward. Everlastingly chained to a single little fragment of the Whole, man himself develops into nothing but a fragment; everlastingly in ear the monotonous sound of the wheel that he turns, he never develops the harmony of his being; and instead of putting the stamp of humanity upon his own nature, he becomes nothing more than the imprint of his occupation or of his specialized knowledge. But even the meagre, fragmentary participation, by which individual members of the State are still linked to the Whole, does not depend upon forms which they spontaneously prescribe for themselves...it is dictated to them with meticulous exactitude by means of a formulary which inhibits all freedom of thought. The dead letter takes the place of living understanding, and a good memory is a safer guide than imagination and feeling" (AE, letter 6, 35).

20. See AE, letter 11, 42–43, and see too letter 13, where Schiller asserts: "At the first sight nothing could seem more diametrically opposed than the tendencies of these two drives, the one pressing for change, the other for changelessness. And yet it is these two drives that between them, exhaust our concept of humanity, and make a third *fundamental drive* that might possibly reconcile the two a completely unthinkable concept." He proceeds to pose the question that he takes to define the philosophical challenge at hand: "How, then, are we to restore the unity of human nature which seems to be utterly destroyed by this primary and radical opposition?" (AE 89).
21. See AE, letter 27, last paragraph.
22. See ELT 33–37.
23. ELT 33–34.
24. StA 3, 163.
25. Hölderlin's great enthusiasm for Fichte is revealed primarily through his correspondence from that period, especially with his friends from Tübingen, Schelling and Hegel.
26. What is special about this text, which some scholars consider to be the first part of the version known as "Hyperion's Youth," is that Hölderlin attempts to write in verse using the metrical patterns of classical Greek poetry. However, it is unclear whether the metrical section is the first part of "Hyperion's Youth," or a separate, self-standing version. On the genesis and various versions of *Hyperion*, see Beissner's introductory essay in his edition of Hölderlin's collected works (StA).
27. The fact that Hölderlin, and Hegel after him, adduce these lectures, is instructive, as it shows that they viewed these polemical lectures – today we would characterize them as "ideological" – as no different from the lectures that make up the various versions of the *Wissenschaftslehre*, where the same ideas are formulated philosophically. What we tend to see as a significant

- difference between Fichte's polemical-political writings, e.g., the *Addresses to the German Nation*, and his later theoretical work is, for Hölderlin and Hegel, simply irrelevant.
28. Some interpretations suggest parallels between figures in the novel and Hölderlin's contemporaries. Some take the scholar to be Fichte himself, and take Hyperion to be a disciple who seeks to actualize the ideals revealed by the scholar.
 29. StA 3, 201–205.
 30. The letter should not be taken as merely providing biographical information. The copious correspondence between Hölderlin and his friends is one of the principal resources available to us for interpreting his philosophical positions, many of which he articulated in his letters. See Frank (2004, 113–126); Henrich (1991).
 31. See ELT 125.
 32. The fragment was discovered relatively recently, in 1960, and has since become a crucial document for anyone seeking to understand the foundational issues with which German Idealism wrestled. It is sometimes referred to "Being, Judgment, Possibility" ("*Seyn, Urtheil, Möglichkeit*").
 33. See ELT 131–132.
 34. ELT 37.
 35. ELT 37–38.
 36. The literal meaning of the German "*Urtheil*" connotes an original or primordial division.
 37. See ELT 37.
 38. On this point it is difficult to ignore the affinity between Hölderlin and Spinoza. In essence, Hölderlin tries to reconfigure the Fichtean search for the Absolute by invoking the Substance posited by Spinoza's ontology. This reconfiguration receives its conceptualization in Hölderlin's poetics, especially his concept of tragedy; see e.g., his short work "The Significance of Tragedy."
 39. Henrich (1982, 46) claims that Hölderlin does not use the term "being" in the Aristotelian sense. As a devoted student of Kant, he contends, it would have been difficult for Hölderlin to have adopted the Aristotelian notion. Rather, he uses the term to signify the possibility of judgment, and hence, of knowledge. But Henrich is only partially right, for although Hölderlin indeed understands the concept of Being as connoting the possibility of separation, it is crucial to keep in mind that Hölderlin's goal is not only to gain knowledge of the true foundation of things, but also, and primarily, to use this knowledge to overcome the separation between subject and object and restore, as it were, the integrity of Being.
 40. See ELT 159–160.
 41. For Hölderlin, and Hegel after him, these concepts are basically equivalent.
 42. See Frank (2004, 117). In Frank's view, Hölderlin, in rejecting the philosophy of subjectivity, actually brings about a "turning point in modern thought."
 43. See Henrich (1982, 41–71).
 44. See Hölderlin's letter to Schiller, Sept. 4, 1795 (StA 6.1, 180–181).
 45. Aside from *Hyperion*, which is in essence a poetic formulation of a philosophical conclusion, Hölderlin wrote several fragments in which he tries to sketch a theory of poetics capable of achieving that which philosophy cannot achieve. See Larmore (2000, 148–152).

46. See *Hyperion* 78.
47. There is no doubt that the figure of Alabanda is an allusion to the Jacobin faction during the French Revolution's "Reign of Terror," just as the entire historical framework of the conflict against the Turks symbolizes, to a great extent, the French Revolution. Hölderlin thus manifestly rejects the Jacobin agenda vis-à-vis the Revolution. See Lukacs (1968, 136–157), which analyzes the political subtext of themes in *Hyperion*, and argues that the political-ideological reading is a plausible alternative to both the various "romantic" readings and the philosophical.
48. *Hyperion* 123.
49. Note that Hölderlin voices this social critique well before Hegel makes it his central theme, and of course, long before Marx.
50. *Hyperion* 3.
51. *Hyperion* 4.
52. *Hyperion* 4.
53. *Hyperion* 131.
54. *Hyperion* 133.
55. There is a sense in which Adorno and Horkheimer's *Dialectic of Enlightenment* sought to reinstate – with the mediation of the Marxist tradition – the parallelism Hölderlin had identified between the individual's alienation from nature and the domination relations in political life. This return to a strong dependency between politics and our relationship to nature leads Adorno and Horkheimer, along with the Marxists, to reject the Hegelian outlook. On the relationship between Hölderlin and the Frankfurt School, see Jamme and Schneider (1990, 130–171).
56. Sublation (*Aufhebung*) is a cancelling out, or suspension, of something [by its antithesis] that nonetheless preserves that which is canceled. In the present context, Hegel rejects the tragic mode of being, but this rejection is fully informed by awareness of the role played by this mode of being, which is a necessary stage in the shaping of the conditions that give rise to the next mode of being, namely, reason.
57. These pathologies are no different, in principle, from those described by Hölderlin in his various works, though he does not situate the discussion in the socio-political realm that Hegel will soon refer to as "civil society."
58. See Habermas (1987, 23); Pippin (1997, chapters 1, 5).
59. FK 55.
60. FK 56.
61. FK 61.
62. FK 67–68.
63. It is possible, of course, to take issue with Hegel's understanding of Kant, but I cannot discuss the various objections to his interpretation of Kant here. In the final analysis, the correctness of Hegel's reading of Kant had no bearing on the genesis of Hegel's response to Kant.
64. Since its discovery by Franz Rosenzweig at the beginning of the twentieth century, this fragment has become the subject of an extensive literature. Some of these works address the question of who is responsible for the ideas expressed in the fragment – Hölderlin, Schelling, or Hegel. See Jamme (1984), an anthology devoted entirely to various facets of the fragment, and Bubner (1980).
65. See ELT 155.

66. The demand for a new mythology reflects the critique that philosophical reflection is incapable of establishing or knowing the originary unity, the attainment of which should be the goal of the new mythology. Although reflective philosophy dismissed and ignored mythology, the new philosophy embraces and revitalizes mythology.
67. See Düsing (1983, 231).
68. This term connotes Hegel's desire to understand humanity itself, rather than to concern himself solely with philosophical argumentation. Hegel and his fellow idealists are interested in the wider implications of philosophical discourse, not just the discourse itself. This is also evident in Hegel's praise of poetry as the "teacher of humanity" (*Lehrerin der Menschheit*); see above at note 65.
69. See FK 75.
70. See FK 68.
71. FK 70.
72. FK 78.
73. FK 166.
74. See Henrich (1982, 57–82).

2 The First Systematic Attempt to Conceptualize the Critique of Culture

1. For a comprehensive survey of Hegel's writings from the Jena period, see Kimmerle (1969, 33–47).
2. "Scientific" in the sense Kant called for in his own philosophical project. See the Preface to the first edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason*.
3. HL 64 (letter dated Nov. 2, 1800).
4. According to Kimmerle, the first sketch of the system had four parts, not three as in its final form. Hegel presents a very rudimentary sketch of the system at the end of *The Difference between Fichte's and Schelling's System of Philosophy*; it is structured as follows: the first part covers "logic or metaphysics," to use the Hegelian rubric; the second covers the philosophy of nature, describing the transition from the science of the Idea (roughly, the highest level of Hegelian metaphysics) as a reflective endeavor to its realization in the natural world; the third describes the transition from the philosophy of nature to the philosophy of spirit, where the Idea is realized in human activity, and specifically, culture; the fourth part surveys the Idea's self-engagement, as expressed in religion, philosophy, and art. See Kimmerle (1970).
5. Kimmerle (1970, 32).
6. Horkheimer's distinction between traditional theory and critical theory well captures Hegel's attempt to build a theory that is not isolated from, but conditioned on, historical reality. See Horkheimer (2002, 188–243).
7. It is important to remember that this two-page text was not consciously drawn up as a manifesto for German Idealism, defining its goals. On its discovery and authorship, see Chapter 1 above, text at note 64.
8. *The System of Ethical Life* (SEL) was not published by Hegel, but discovered only early in the twentieth century, and first appeared in print in 1913; the title

was chosen by the editor of Hegel's political writings, Johannes Hoffmeister. The *Essay on Natural Law* (NL), as we will refer to it, was published in two parts in 1802 and 1803 in the *Critical Journal of Philosophy*, which Hegel edited together with Schelling.

9. My reading of the Jena years is thus in line with several important scholarly interpretations of the past two decades, which contend – approvingly or not – that the Jena writings provide the basis for an alternative to the Kantian socio-cultural model of modernity.
10. SEL, Introduction, 100.
11. SEL, Introduction, 100.
12. This has led many scholars to dismiss the brief introduction (see, e.g., Honneth 1995, 186), and special terminology as unimportant for an understanding of SEL; the terminology is sometimes even claimed to impede understanding. I believe, however, Hegel did not use the terms haphazardly, but chose them deliberately to emphasize the relationship between epistemic considerations and ethical considerations. Granted, the use of borrowed Kantian terminology seems to complicate Hegel's presentation of his ideas, but he uses it because he takes it to best convey the identity between thought and the world.
13. SEL, Introduction, 101.
14. This underscores Hegel's opposition to the natural-law model of social life, on which the natural state is pre-ethical, and only by exiting the state of nature can a normative ethical regime be constituted.
15. SEL 103.
16. SEL 105.
17. SEL 105.
18. SEL 113. That which is complete at one stage in the process of the unfolding of the Absolute will subsequently be shown to have been incomplete from a different perspective, mandating its sublation by a more adequate conception. This is the essence of the dialectic process, and we will see below that the universal-particular itself evolves.
19. It is important to note that the case of speech is, in a certain sense, special, and very different from that of tools, because language is the universal substrate that links, not subject to object, but subjects to one another, and thus in essence serves as a conceptual precondition for emergence of the human need for mutual recognition, and for the conflict that arises in the wake of this need.
20. They will, however, be addressed in Chapters 3 and 4, where I survey the 1803/04 and 1805/06 Jena lectures on "Realphilosophie."
21. SEL 116.
22. Hegel may be proposing this account as conjecture, in which case it serves merely as narrative thickening of the social contract account of the emergence of political institutions. But he may be doing something quite different, namely, exploring emergence of the individual who will go on to enter into societal arrangements, the individual for whom cooperation with others is an inherent aspect of existence.
23. SEL 118.
24. SEL 118.
25. I will only discuss trade, not value and contract.

26. SEL 121.
27. Hegel sees this as due to the transition from a barter- to a money-based economy, that is, as ensuing from the institution of "value."
28. SEL 124.
29. SEL 124.
30. Hegel states this explicitly in the next section ("The Negative or Freedom or Transgression"), when he exposes the difference that was covered up by the universal perspective. The section provides an excellent example of Hegel's methodology: in the relationship between the universal and the particular, one perspective is always privileged, and thus it is imperative to switch to the other perspective to see that which wasn't disclosed by its counterpart. Ultimately, the goal is to find the vantage point from which the two perspectives are balanced and neither dominates the other, or as he put it in the introduction to SEL, "establishment of perfect adequacy between intuition and concept."
31. This is not the same lord–bondsperson relationship that will be presented in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Here, the relationship serves to express the renewed disclosure of the particularity of human existence, the natural, indeed, primal difference between every individual, differences that need not – at this point in Hegel's depiction of the development of human culture – be understood in terms of the social institution of slavery, which has not yet emerged on the historical scene. Hegel stresses that the differences between individuals are natural, and do not result from an unequal conferral of rights, a point that is underscored by the fact that the negation of the natural hierarchy is the equally natural family unit. It might be argued that in a sense, what Hegel is describing here is the Hobbesian state of nature with its primordial inequality. However, Hegel is describing a state of inequality that exists **after** various social institutions have been established (tools, labor, exchange), whereas for Hobbes, these institutions are only justifiable as a means of leveling the said inequalities.
32. SEL 126.
33. Hegel himself does not attempt to ascribe to emergence of the family importance beyond its role in serving to unite the universal and particular. Each of the earlier social institutions was one-sided, and the family represents, for the first time in the social context, the possibility of revealing the universal–particular in the relationship between the individual as a member of the family, and the family as a social institution. But although the family exemplifies the kind of relationship that Hegel envisages, he doesn't really provide any proof of the family's dialectical necessity. And, I would argue, any attempt to derive the family dialectically from the earlier stages in the development of natural ethical life will come across as forced.
34. Hegel does not provide, as Aristotle, among others, did, a satisfactory criterion for distinguishing the natural from the unnatural; his chief concern is to distinguish between the various forms of social life that are firmly anchored in the natural world, as opposed to states conceived as mechanisms for coordinating between individuals and groups.
35. See text above at note 11.
36. SEL 126–127.
37. SEL 128–129. This argument is formulated in very strange language: the child is described as wholly the product of her family relationships, as the concrete

expression of her parents' marriage contract, and as the fullest expression of the totality of the family. Psychoanalysts would have a field-day with these characterizations and their symbolization.

38. This refers, not to SEL as a whole, but to its second part, "The Negative or Freedom or Transgression."
39. The situation Hegel describes in the second part can be understood as parallel to that of Hobbes' state of nature. In the Hobbesian state of nature, the individual is unencumbered by constraints that would hinder him harming his fellows. Being rational, she surrenders this freedom for the sake of self-preservation. As we saw above, Hegel's account is similar, except that it applies after, rather than before, social institutions have been established. Hegel thus identifies the freedom to harm one's fellow with crime, which is a social institution, where on the Hobbesian account the notion of crime is meaningless in the pre-political stage. Hence the significant difference between the two accounts is that the Hobbesian state of nature is pre-ethical, whereas for Hegel it emerges *after* the stage of natural ethics.
40. In "The Negative or Freedom or Transgression," Hegel puts forward a phenomenological account parallel to that presented in the first part of SEL ("Absolute Ethical Life on the Basis of Relation"), but this time the phenomenological description focuses on negativity as a force that is suppressed by culture, but endures in the background. Hegel explores the various forms and manifestations of the drive to negate.
41. Here Hegel seems to be thinking of talionic justice, the idea that wrongdoers should get their just deserts.
42. SEL 132.
43. SEL 132.
44. The implication that only through a criminal act can one attain this awareness of autonomous individuality no doubt seems far-fetched. But it gains plausibility when we consider the influence of theology on Hegel's thought, calling to mind the parallel with the Garden of Eden story. There too, man's recognition of his separateness, his individuality, results from a "criminal" act – disobeying a divine directive. On the centrality of the notion of the "Fall" to Hegel's thought, see Fackenheim (1967).
45. See SEL (132–133).
46. To illustrate how a conflict over property can cause or turn into a conflict over recognition of the individual, the case of intellectual property and copyright is instructive.
47. SEL 135.
48. SEL 134–136.
49. SEL 136.
50. We must keep in mind that the conflicts discussed here are not directly motivated by the need for recognition, but rather by threats to one's honor and property rights.
51. SEL 137.
52. See also SEL 138.
53. SEL 138.
54. SEL 139.
55. By the end of the second part of SEL, Hegel has, by describing the state of self-imperilment of equals in a battle where legal rights are of no account, a conflict that constitutes war, in effect provided a preliminary description

of how the individual functions as a free individual within a nation. In wartime, the individual puts himself in the service of a higher goal, a goal that transcends the natural institution of the family. Self-endangerment in the context of war is an incipient expression of how the free individual acts in concert with a general objective that goes beyond natural teleology.

56. SEL 143.
57. SEL 144.
58. SEL, Introduction, 101.
59. Note the thematic continuity with Hegel's theological writings, where he sought to show that the Christian religion, interpreted, since the Enlightenment, as heteronymous, is actually compatible with the model of the autonomous, self-determining subject.
60. SEL 101.
61. It is intriguing to note not only the affinity to Greek tragedy, but also the similarity between Hegel's motivations and the political motivations underlying the emergence of the tragic literary genre. One of the classic explanations for the emergence of this genre cites the conflict between two irreconcilable views – the archaic and the law-based – as to man's place in the world. On the former, the gods are ultimately responsible for all that transpires, whether just or unjust; on the latter, the individual bears responsibility for his actions. There is, then, a distinct parallel between the transition from myth to law that is adduced as motivating the tragic genre, and the transition from natural ethical life to absolute ethical life that motivates Hegel's dialectical metaphysics. In both cases, there is an attempt to address a cultural crisis – in Hegel's case, modernity's crisis of alienation – using an oblique methodology.
62. Much has been written about Hegel's views on the tragic genre, and Greek tragedies in particular; see, e.g., Bradley (1909, 69–95); Hyppolite (1996, 49–58).
63. On this dimension of the *Oresteia*, see Goldhill (2004).
64. The hill, adjacent to the Acropolis in Athens, where the governing council met.
65. Aeschylus, *Oresteian Trilogy*, *Eumenides*, "The Rage of the Furies."
66. "On the Scientific Ways of Treating Natural Law, on its Place in Practical Philosophy, and its Relation to the Positive Sciences of Right" (*Über die wissenschaftlichen Behandlungsarten des Naturrechts*).
67. Hegel formulated this slightly differently, as the difference between the two approaches' respective attitudes to the form–content distinction: the empirical approach extracts pure principles without impacting the content to which they apply; the formal approach takes the distinction between form and content to be absolute, hence any imposition of form on content necessarily distorts the content.
68. NL 106.
69. NL 110.
70. NL 110, emphasis in original.
71. NL 110.
72. NL 116.
73. Hegel is insufficiently sensitive to the considerable differences between the positions of Kant and Fichte. Hegel's critique is apt with respect to Fichte, but

Hegel contends that it also applies, to a lesser degree, to Kant, who maintains that there is reciprocal dependence between the principle of self-consciousness and the sensory manifold to which it is applied. Hegel claims that the dependence is not balanced, however, and the principle of self-consciousness is dominant. This critique of Kant, I would argue, is valid in the sphere of practical ethics, where the law–nature distinction is indeed absolute, and there is no empirical input into moral deliberations. But Hegel, who upholds the fundamental inseparability of theoretical and practical principles, systematically applies critique that is applicable in one realm to others as well, without noticing that Kant distinguishes between the theoretical and the practical.

74. NL 118.

75. See Ritter (1982); Riedel (1984); Honneth (1995); Siep (1996, 273–288).

76. See Honneth (1992, 204); Riedel (1984, 84).

77. Hegel does not purport to be an anthropologist, and does not purport to identify a point in human history when this change took place. Note too that the distinction Hegel is speaking of here is a delicate one. Hegel is arguing that there is a distinction between behavioral norms in general, and ethical norms that are adopted as a conscious and rationally-justified choice between contending alternatives. Obviously, even at the stage of natural ethical life, there are behavioral norms, but they do not arise from choice and rational deliberation. Social codes of conduct should, however, be seen as moral codes that allow us to make meaningful determinations as to the morality or fittingness of a given act. This position must be espoused by anyone who subscribes to naturalism – the view that our ethical norms are anchored in the natural world – but acknowledges the possibility that the meaning ascribed to norms can change.

78. NL 147.

79. NL 147.

80. In SEL, the struggle to the death is always dialogical: it involves two individuals or families who confront each other. In NL, Hegel hints that it might be possible for an individual to confront the possibility of death on her own, by self-endangerment.

81. NL 136–137.

82. NL 138.

83. NL 139–140.

84. NL 148ff.

85. NL 151.

86. NL 151–152.

3 Jena Lectures 1803/1804

1. The 1803/1804 lectures have been translated into English as *First Philosophy of Spirit* (Part III of the System of Speculative Philosophy 1803/4) (FPS). FPS is sometimes referred to as *Jena Philosophy of 1803/4*. The 1805/1806 lectures have been translated into English as *Hegel and the Human Spirit. A translation of the Jena Lectures on the Philosophy of Spirit (1805–6) with Commentary* (SPS).

2. FPS 213.

3. See Horstmann 1972, 87–118.

4. The concept of Spirit can be described as Janus-faced: both synchronic and diachronic. The former aspect has a fixed structure, the latter is characterized by movement.
5. FPS 206.
6. FPS 206.
7. FPS 206–207. Hegel, like many philosophers associated with the “philosophy of subjectivity” tradition, maintains that consciousness and self-consciousness are virtually identical. That is, he accepts the premise that the state of consciousness presupposes self-consciousness.
8. See Chapter 2 above, page 63.
9. For the sake of simplicity, in discussing how Hegel arrives at the idea of the Absolute as Spirit, I use the terms “the infinite,” “the Absolute,” and “the totality” interchangeably.
10. It seems to me that when we go back to Hegel’s writings themselves, no such rehabilitation is necessary, but in the literature, there has been little enthusiasm for engaging in close reading of the Jena writings.
11. For an exhaustive treatment of the various transmogrifications of the normative reading, see Ottmann (1977).
12. Riedel (1984, 95).
13. See Williams (1997, chapters 1 and 5).
14. Horstmann (1968, 15).
15. See Henrich (2003, 231–245).
16. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B404.
17. See Becker (1974, 75). Becker offers an insightful explanation of the equivocality of the concept of the pure ego. It is, he says, both the notion Kant put forward as a formal condition for the possibility of objective experience, and at the same time, the principle that enables us to grasp that notion as an object.
18. Habermas (1974, 146).
19. Habermas (1974, 149–150).
20. Habermas (1974, 152).
21. See pp. 63 and 118 above.
22. FPS 242.
23. See FPS 209.
24. FPS 241–242.
25. FPS 227.
26. FPS 234–235.
27. FPS 214.
28. Hegel characterizes this transition as ensuing from a “derangement” or “sickness” that impaired the animal capacity to instinctively experience things as discrete and self-contained; see FPS 220.
29. The opposition between finite and infinite is, in essence, parallel to that between singular and universal. Natural existence, being particular and ephemeral, is finite, and rational existence, being applicable to a multitude of particulars, is infinite.
30. FPS 218.
31. See, e.g., FPS 219.
32. This can be readily recognized as the fundamental dialectic of subject and object. At the initial stage, that of sensation, existence is limited to objective

sensations. This is followed by subjective existence, after which a search for a synthesis between them ensues.

33. FPS 219–220.
34. See p. 135 above.
35. FPS 221.
36. Although the English translation uses “speech” rather than “language,” Hegel is not making a distinction between spoken and written language, and imposing such a distinction is unwarranted. I will therefore use the terms interchangeably.
37. See FPS 221.
38. FPS 221.
39. FPS 221.
40. See FPS 222.
41. It is not difficult to raise various objections to Hegel’s theory of the epistemic priority of names for ostensibly defined natural objects over concepts that link such names. Indeed, it is not clear how it is even possible for natural objects to be named simply on the basis of ostension and memory without any pre-existing innate conceptual scheme. But I doubt it would be philosophically edifying for us to let Hegel’s account of the emergence of language in FPS be drawn into the debate over the existence of non-conceptual knowledge, since his account is not primarily focused on the genesis of language, but offered in the course of describing the constitution of the social individual.
42. This ascription of feelings to meanings is not a category mistake. For even in what appears to be a completely epistemic discussion, the ethical-social issues that motivate Hegel resonate in themes such as the rejection of external determination – dependence on others – and return to self-determination. It is evident that in his account of the development of cognition, Hegel is transposing the dilemma of autonomy and alienation to more neutral territory. The stage of absolute singularity is only internal and thus barren. Direct escape from this internality is unsuccessful, as it generates dependent existence: the singular name is determined by its relationships with other names. In response, it attempts to regain its independence by withdrawing into itself, but is unable to do so. Its only option is self-reflectiveness, whereby it unilaterally severs its dependence on other singularities and restores itself through absolute negation, i.e., by self-determination that renders it devoid of any determination whatsoever (private language). This process mirrors Hegel’s critique of Kant’s autonomous moral agent.
43. FPS 226.
44. FPS 226–227.
45. On this non-dependence, which Hegel characterizes in terms of freedom, independence, and self-determination, see FPS 227–228.
46. FPS 230.
47. FPS 230–31.
48. There is a problem with the internal logic, specifically, the chronology, of Hegel’s account. It would be reasonable to assume, e.g., that sexual existence precedes, or emerges simultaneously with, tool use. But Hegel’s account seems to say the opposite, viz., that engagement with objects, labor, precedes natural sexual activity. The most plausible explanation is that Hegel’s

reconstruction of the evolution of ethical consciousness is not intended as a historical account.

49. FPS 231.
50. FPS 231.
51. FPS 233.
52. Hegel's claim that the family is the paradigm of self-constitution through another consciousness, i.e., someone else, need not be read restrictively. It can be argued that any interpersonal relationship can be a vehicle for consciousness's self-knowledge. In other words, it is not completely clear whether Hegel takes the familial element in self-constitution to be prior to the element of self-consciousness as constituted through another self-consciousness.
 Recalling the structure of SEL suggests one possible explanation for the precedence that Hegel appears to ascribe to the family. This structure distinguished between natural ethical life and absolute ethical life. The family as a self-conscious totality is the highest stage of natural existence, but the transition to absolute ethical life mandates that natural ethical life be superseded. Although he does not draw attention to it, Hegel retains these categories in "Philosophy of Spirit," or at least in the first series of lectures, FPS, where the family continues to represent the zenith of natural existence. As in SEL, its importance lies in its serving as a *necessary preparatory stage for a higher level*, namely, mutual recognition. This explanation reflects the fact that Hegel is attempting to depict the transition from natural to socio-political ethical life as a qualitative continuum of stages of the development of consciousness.
53. See FPS 233, where Hegel summarizes the theoretical and practical phases of consciousness's transition from ideal "for itself" existence to actualized "for itself" existence.
54. See Horstmann (1968, 62).
55. FPS 236.
56. Any interpretation of this point must remain somewhat speculative, as the text is incomplete; see FPS 235, nn. 44–45.
57. There is no section break or heading in the German original, but on the basis of scholarly textual considerations, H.S. Harris, who translated it into English, has entitled it "B. Transition to Real Existence: the Negative."
58. FPS 236.
59. FPS 236.
60. FPS 237–238.
61. This calls to mind the institution of the duel, recourse to which was still frequent in Hegel's day.
62. See FPS 238.
63. FPS 239–240.
64. FPS 240–241.
65. FPS 241–242.
66. Neither in this chapter, in discussing FPS, nor in the previous chapter, in discussing SEL and NL, have I discussed the sections of these works that treat concrete political institutions (e.g., government, legislation, taxes). There are two reasons. First, as a matter of principle, when Hegel reaches the point in his exposition where the individual has achieved full autonomy, and the discussion shifts to how such concrete political institutions express and sustain

the individual's autonomy, the basic tension has already been resolved. That is, Hegel has worked through the fundamental problem of reconciling the individual's will to self-determination, and yearning for autonomy, with her need to maintain a strong meaningful connection to her surroundings, thereby forestalling alienation. The second reason is more prosaic: in the next chapter, these institutions will indeed be discussed at length.

67. Habermas 1999 ("From Kant to Hegel and Back Again ...") attests to the salience of this position among scholars. Habermas presents Hegel's view as a pioneering attempt to establish "anti-mentalism." He defines mentalism as the idea that introspection affords consciousness knowledge of its own structure, and hence, of the preconditions for knowledge in general. The earlier Jena writings, he asserts, present the clearest exposition of Hegel's critique of mentalism, from which Hegel retreats in FPS, when he adopts the mentalistic model of consciousness and the conceptual framework of Spirit. Also noteworthy is the fact that the article is a reworking of an article on the same theme that Habermas had published in 1974, attesting to the renewed interest in Hegel in the English-speaking world. Yet Habermas himself vacillates between the different interpretive approaches: even in "From Kant to Hegel" there is a shift toward the social view by the end of the article.
68. The most comprehensive exposition of this view is Wildt 1982, which presents Hegel's thought from the Jena period as constructive criticism of Kantian ethics. Wildt stresses that this critique reflects Hegel's acceptance of Fichte's critique of Kantian ethics, and constitutes the culmination of the development of Kantian ethical rationalism.
69. Siep (1996, 273–288) offers a comprehensive examination of the Hobbes–Hegel nexus.
70. Honneth (1995, 5).

4 Jena Lectures 1805/1806

1. *Hegel and the Human Spirit: A Translation of the Jena Lectures on the Philosophy of Spirit (1805–6) with Commentary*, trans. and commentary by Leo Rauch (SPS).
2. See pp. 117, 126–7 above.
3. The term Hegel uses is "*wirklicher*," which Rauch translates as "actual," but I prefer "objective," because Hegel's intended meaning here is virtually identical to that of the notion of "objective Spirit" in the *Encyclopedia*.
4. SPS 85–86.
5. SPS 86.
6. SPS 87.
7. Hegel invokes the biblical creation story to illustrate the idea of constituting an object by naming it, comparing Adam's having given "a name to all things" to "the primal creativity exercised by Spirit" (SPS 89). Adam's power to assign names is presented as expressing his sovereignty over nature. It is interesting that Hegel ascribes the creative act of naming to Adam, though on the biblical account, only the names of *animals* are assigned by Adam ("And out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field... and brought them to Adam to see what he would call them; and whatever Adam

called every living creature, that was its name" (Gen. 2:18–20). But this takes place only after the other natural entities *had been named by God* ("And God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night... and God called the firmament Heaven... and God called the dry land Earth" (Gen. 1:5, 8, 10), etc. Hegel clearly upholds the German Idealist view that man has the power to shape and subdue nature. Man's cognitive capacities provide the means to constitute and control his environment, but doing so comes at a heavy cost, alienating him from his natural reality. Here Hegel anticipates the critique voiced in Horkheimer and Adorno (1982).

8. SPS 89.
9. SPS 91.
10. Hegel assigns memory two distinct roles. First, memory ensures the connection between a name and the image it denotes. At a higher level, memory points to relationships between different words.
11. SPS 92.
12. Horstmann (1968) offers a compelling description of this process.
13. SPS 95–96.
14. SPS 97.
15. SPS 99.
16. SPS 119.
17. This approach, which sees the section on "Will" as setting out preconditions for the possibility of cognizing the world, is emphasized by Habermas (1974), Wildt (1982), and Honneth (1995). The problem with this thesis is that its proponents do not acknowledge the need to explain the relationship between satisfying physical needs and reflection on the world.
18. SPS 99.
19. SPS 99–100.
20. Here Hegel has adopted in full Fichte's view that the constitution of consciousness does not ensue from a passive stance vis-à-vis the world, but is active self-actualization impelled by a natural drive, by instinct.
21. It appears that the choice of "drive" as the element that mediates between the "aspects" of will reflects Hegel's desire to present drive as a concept, yet demand that its objects be realized.
22. We see here, as we have seen many times before in the Jena writings, that the ideal of overcoming fragmentation can never be achieved by separation from the external world and retreat to a self-contained inner world. Any attempt to do so will fail, since it is impossible to sustain existence without the "other." Hence the process of surmounting alienation must contend with a pattern of recurring vacillation between fleeing to the inner and fleeing from the inner.
23. SPS 101–102.
24. SPS 102.
25. Since doing so would involve entering into the subtleties of the theories espoused by the major figures of German Idealism, especially Fichte and Schelling, and more peripheral thinkers such as Reinhold and Jacobi.
26. SPS 103.
27. Honneth (1995, 35–36).
28. Honneth (1995, 36).
29. SPS 104.

30. There is little point in a forced attempt to offer a charitable interpretation of these doctrines in themselves, and it will be more fruitful to explore what motivated Hegel to postulate them as a means of advancing the transition from the instrumental stage in the development of consciousness to the intersubjective stage.
31. SPS 106.
32. SPS 105, note 16.
33. Wildt makes another point in this context. He claims that the role Hegel assigns to the feminine, as a necessary component in the constitution of practical reason, breaks with the longstanding philosophical tradition of completely ignoring the role of gender relations in shaping practical reason; see Wildt (1982, 354). Not surprisingly, given this sort of sensitivity, Hegel's writings lend themselves to feminist and other non-traditional readings.
34. SPS 107.
35. SPS 107. In defining the notion of love, Hegel asserts: "Each one [here exists] only as determinate will, character, as the natural individual whose uncultivated natural Self is recognized."
36. Wildt (1982, 356).
37. Honneth (1995, 38).
38. MacIntyre argues that this project was untenable from the outset. "In that period, 'morality' became the name for that particular sphere in which rules of conduct which are neither theological nor legal nor aesthetic are allowed a cultural space of their own. It is only in the later seventeenth century and in the eighteenth century, when this distinguishing of the moral from the theological, the legal and the aesthetic has become a received doctrine that the project of an independent, rational justification of morality becomes not merely the concern of individual thinkers, but central to Northern European culture" (MacIntyre 2013, 46).
39. See Wildt (1982, 15).
40. See Chapter 1 above.
41. I have skipped over SPS's treatment of the struggle for recognition, since it is quite similar to that of FPS and SEL; see Chapter 2, §3–4; Chapter 3, §3.
42. SPS 118.
43. SPS 118.
44. Honneth (1995, 50).
45. It is also possible to read Part 2 as critiquing the bourgeois society of Hegel's day and the division of labor on which it was based; see Dickey (1987, 253–277).
46. SPS 120.
47. SPS 121.
48. See Schiller, AE, letter 5.
49. SPS 123.
50. SPS 122–123.
51. SPS 124.
52. SPS 125.
53. SPS 125, emphasis in original.
54. SPS 126.
55. SPS 127.

56. SPS 130–131. Rauch notes that “Herostratus set fire to the Temple of Artemis in order to immortalize himself.”
57. SPS 132.
58. SPS 117–118.
59. SPS 128.
60. This is particularly noteworthy given that the overcoming of precisely such alienation and estrangement is the goal of the Hegelian project. If that goal is not taken into account, it could be claimed that Hegel’s remarks on crime and punishment, particularly in *The Philosophy of Right*, where he returns to these issues, simply express critique of Kant’s stance on these issues, especially regarding the moral agent. In other words, it might be claimed that Hegel’s focus is provision of an account of the individual’s moral decision-making, and not her relationship with society; see Siep (1992).
61. SPS 151 (emphasis added).
62. I.e., Hegel will have failed just as Hölderlin’s vision of such unity, represented by Diotima, fails in *Hyperion*; see Chapter 1, §2.5.
63. See Habermas (1987, 1999); Honneth (1995, 67).
64. Siep (1992, 166).
65. Siep (1992, 178).
66. See Siep (1979, 26–56).
67. See Siep (1979, 1992).
68. Siep (1979, 67).
69. SPS 149, note 4.
70. Siep (1979, 23).
71. See Siep (1979, chs. 2 and 3).
72. See §1 above.
73. See Pippin (2008, part 3); Honneth (2010, chapter 3).
74. I deliberately do not use the term “totalitarian,” as many commentators do, to avoid the kind of anachronism manifested in polemical speculation about “Hegel’s attitude” to the totalitarian state.
75. SPS 151.
76. SPS 154–155.
77. SPS 155.
78. SPS 155.
79. SPS 156–157, emphasis added.
80. The passage in question is frequently cited in the course of ongoing efforts to cast Hegel’s political thought as in line with the views of the liberal camp, in contrast to the conservative statism formerly imputed to him; see Avineri (1972); Ritter (1982).
81. SPS 158.
82. SPS 158.
83. On Hegel’s critique of democracy, see Wellmer (1998, 3–39).
84. This reading of Hegel’s position is diametrically opposed to that proffered by Honneth, who sees “Constitution” as completely abandoning the intersubjective principle of mutual recognition in favor of a monological principle that dictates the parameters of ethical life unilaterally; see Honneth (1995, 61).
85. SPS 160–161.
86. See Wellmer (1998, 137–177).

87. See p. 206 above.
88. SPS 163.
89. SPS 173.
90. SPS 163.
91. As Hegel describes it, this class does not really seem isomorphic to the urban bourgeoisie connoted by the term “burghers,” but rather to the class of artisans or tradespeople.
92. SPS 165.
93. SPS 165.
94. SPS 166.
95. SPS 166.
96. See Avineri (1972, 107–108).
97. Hegel’s account of the classes is not mentioned in Honneth (1995), Habermas (1999), or even Siep (1982), all of which apparently reject out of hand the idea of classes as a legitimate source of social differentiation within the totality.
98. SPS 167.
99. See Taylor (1979, 100–111); Avineri (1972, 110–117).
100. SPS 171–172.
101. Rauch translates “Wissenschaft” as science, but “philosophy” better captures Hegel’s intent.
102. SPS 173.
103. Taylor (1999, 158), and see Taylor (1979).
104. This consensus view is expressed in, among others, Pinkard (1994); Pippin (1997); and most explicitly, Honneth (2000).
105. Taylor (1999, 158).
106. Taylor (1999, 158–159, emphasis added).
107. Yovel (2005, 11–40) takes this view, putting forward a Kantian reading that restricts itself to finite reason, eschewing the Absolute as inherently beyond the grasp of human understanding.
108. This may be why those who take this approach uphold the Kant–Hegel continuity thesis. They read Hegel as completing the Kantian project, and therefore committed to the post-metaphysical stance Kant was the first major exponent of.
109. Pinkard (1994, 252).
110. Pinkard (1994, 222, 254).
111. Pinkard (1999, 229).
112. DFS 89.
113. DFS 89.
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